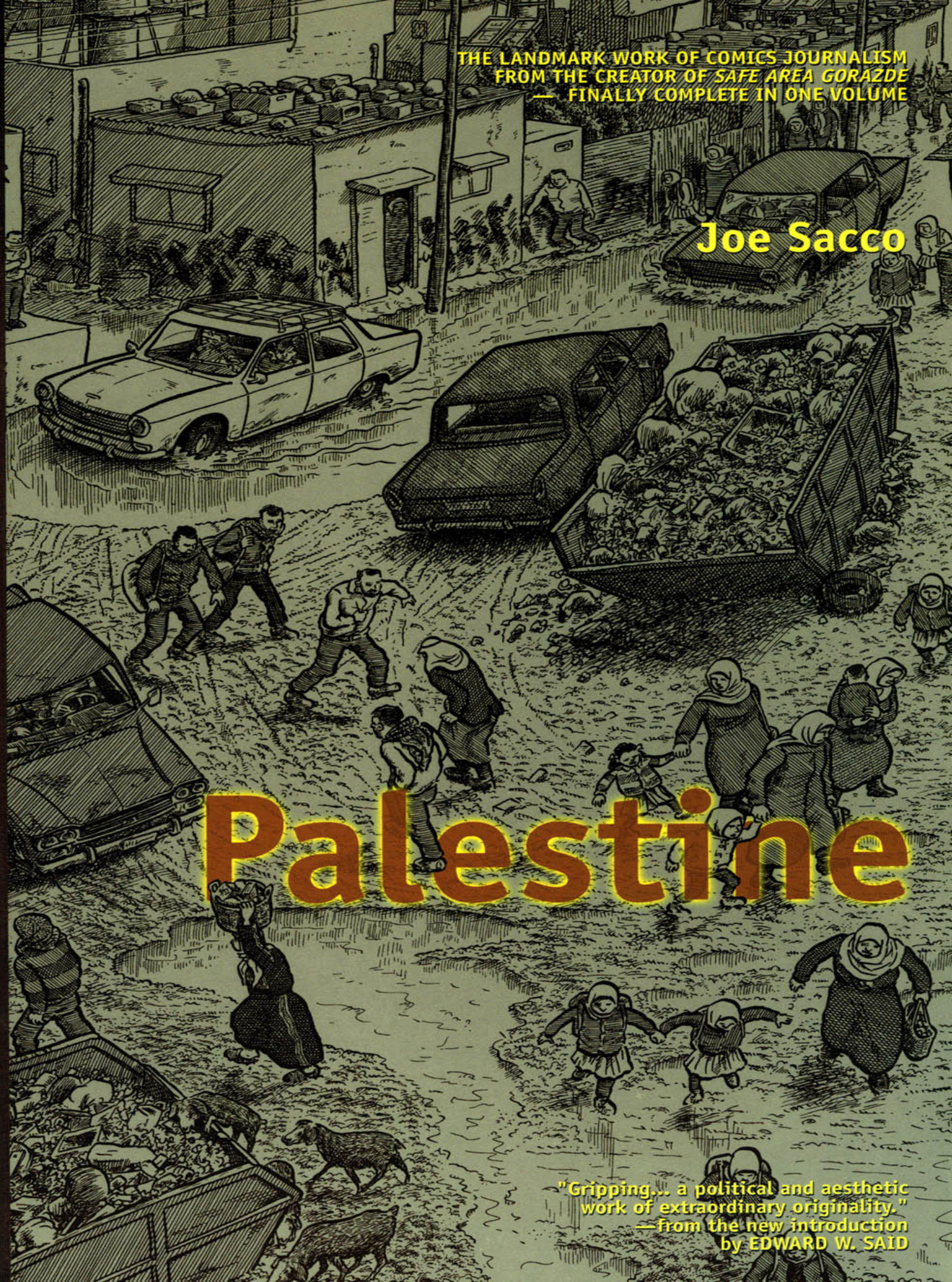
THE LANDMARK WORK OF COMICS JOURNALISM
FROM THE CREATOR OF *SAFE AREA GORAŽDE*
— FINALLY COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME
Joe Sacco
Palestine
"Gripping... a political and aesthetic work of extraordinary originality."
—from the new introduction by EDWARD W. SAID

Joe Sacco

Palestine

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Dedicated to

Kenji, Erlis, Jamileh, Jad, Jemal, and Shafeek

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HOMAGE TO JOE SACCO

by Edward Said

Comic books are a universal phenomenon associated with adolescence. They seem to exist in all languages and cultures, from East to West. In subject matter they go the whole range from inspired and fantastic to sentimental and silly; all of them, however, are easy to read, to pass around, store, and throw away. Many comics are like *Asterix* and *Tin-Tin*, a continuing serial adventure for the young people who read them faithfully month after month; over time, like the two I mentioned, they seem to acquire a life of their own, with recurring characters, plot situations, and phrases that turn their readers, whether in Egypt, India or Canada, into a sort of club in which every member knows and can refer to a whole set of common assumptions and names. Most adults, I think, tend to connect comics with what is frivolous or ephemeral, and there is an assumption that as one grows older they are put aside for more serious pursuits, except very occasionally (as is the case with Art Spiegelman's *Maus*) when a forbiddingly grim subject is treated by a serious comic book artist. But, as we shall soon see, these are very rare occasions indeed, since what is first of all required is a first-rate talent.

I don't remember when exactly I read my first comic book, but I do remember exactly how liberated and subversive I felt as a result. Everything about the enticing book of colored pictures, but specially its untidy, sprawling format, the colorful, riotous extravagance of its pictures, the unrestrained passage between what the characters thought and said, the exotic creatures and adventures reported and depicted: all this made up for a hugely wonderful thrill, entirely unlike anything I had hitherto known or experienced.

My incongruously Arab Protestant family and education in the colonial post World War Two Middle East were very bookish and academically very demanding. An unremitting sobriety governed all things. These were certainly not the days either of television, or of numerous easily available entertainments. Radio was our link to the outside world, and because Hollywood films were considered both inevitable and somehow morally risky, we were kept to a regimen of one per week, each carefully vetted by my parents, certified by some unrevealed (to us) standard of judgment as acceptable and therefore not *bad* for children.

Not quite thirteen, I entered high school just after the fall of Palestine in 1948. Like all the members of my family, male and female, I was enrolled in British schools, which seemed to be modeled after their story-book equivalents in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and the various accounts of Eton, Harrow, Rugby that I had gleaned from my omnivorous reading of almost exclusively English books. In that late imperial setting of a highly conflicted world of mostly Arab and Levantine children, British teachers, in largely Muslim Arab countries themselves undergoing turbulent change, where the curriculum was based on the Oxford and Cambridge School Certificate (as the standardized English high school diploma was called in those days), the sudden intrusion of American comic books

— which were instantly banned by parents and school authorities — burst like a small typhoon. In a matter of hours I was illicitly awash in a flood of Superman, Tarzan, Captain Marvel and Wonder Woman adventures that boggled and certainly diverted my mind from the stricter and grayer things I should have been addressing.

Trying to reason why the ban against this pleasurable new world was so strict and seemed so rigidly enforced at home got me absolutely nowhere with my adamant parents except for the explanation that comics interfered with one's schoolwork. I have spent years trying to reconstruct the logic of the ban and have concluded over time that the prohibition very accurately grasped (certainly more than I did at the time) what it is that comics did so well and so uniquely. There were first of all such things as slang and violence which ruffled the pretended calm of the learning process. Second, and perhaps more important though never stated, there was the release provided to my sexually repressed young life by outrageous characters (some of them like Sheena of the Jungle, dressed far too skimpily and sexily) who did and said things that could not be admitted either for reasons of probability and logic or, perhaps more crucially, because they violated conventional norms — norms of behavior, thought, accepted social forms. Comics played havoc with the logic of a+b+c+d and they certainly encouraged one not to think in terms of what the teacher expected or what a subject like history demanded. I vividly remember the elation I felt as I surreptitiously smuggled a copy of *Captain Marvel* in my briefcase and read it furtively on the bus or under the covers or in the back of the class. Besides, comics provided one with a directness of approach (the attractively and literally overstated combination of pictures and words) that seemed unassailably true on the one hand, and marvelously close, impinging, familiar on the other. In ways that I still find fascinating to decode, comics in their relentless foregrounding — far more, say, than film cartoons or funnies, neither of which mattered much to me — seemed to say what couldn't otherwise be said, perhaps what wasn't permitted to be said or imagined, defying the ordinary processes of thought, which are policed, shaped and re-shaped by all sorts of pedagogical as well as ideological pressures. I knew nothing of this then, but I felt that comics freed me to think and imagine and see differently.

Cut now to the final decade of the twentieth century. As an American of Palestinian origin, I have found myself necessarily involved in the battle for Palestinian self-determination and human rights. Sidelined by distance, illness, and exile, my role has been to defend this most difficult cause, to defend and attempt to portray its complicated and often suppressed dimensions in writing and speaking in public, all the while trying to keep up with the unfolding of our history as a people in places like Amman, Beirut, and then finally, when I was able to return to Palestine in 1992 for the first time since my family and I left Jerusalem in 1947, on the actual West Bank and Gaza.

When I began this effort just after the June 1967 War even the word "Palestine" was next to impossible to use in public discourse. I recall signs carried outside teach-ins and lectures on Palestine in that period blaring "there is no Palestine," and in 1969 Golda Meir made her famous statement

saying that the Palestinians did not exist. Much of my work as a writer and lecturer was concerned with refuting the misrepresentations and dehumanizations of our history, trying at the same time to give the Palestinian narrative — so effectively blotted out by the media and legions of antagonistic polemicists — a presence and a human shape.

Without any warning or preparation, about ten years ago my young son brought home Joe Sacco's first comic book on Palestine. Cut off as I was from the world of active comic reading, trading and bartering, I had no idea at all that Sacco or his gripping work existed. I was plunged directly back into the world of the first great intifada (1987-92) and, with even greater effect, back into the animated, enlivening world of the comics I had read so long ago. The shock of recognition was therefore a double one, and the more I read compulsively in Sacco's *Palestine* comic books, of which there are about ten, all of them now collected into one volume which I hope will make them widely available not only to American readers but all over the world, the more convinced I was that here was a political and aesthetic work of extraordinary originality, quite unlike any other in the long, often turgid and hopelessly twisted debates that had occupied Palestinians, Israelis, and their respective supporters.

As we also live in a media-saturated world in which a huge preponderance of the world's news images are controlled and diffused by a handful of men sitting in places like London and New York, a stream of comic book images and words, assertively etched, at times grotesquely emphatic and distended to match the extreme situations they depict, provide a remarkable antidote. In Joe Sacco's world there are no smooth-talking announcers and presenters, no unctuous narrative of Israeli triumphs, democracy, achievements, no assumed and re-confirmed representations — all of them disconnected from any historical or social source, from any lived reality — of Palestinians as rock-throwing, rejectionist, and fundamentalist villains whose main purpose is to make life difficult for the peace-loving, persecuted Israelis. What we get instead is seen through the eyes and persona of a modest-looking ubiquitous crew-cut young American man who appears to have wandered into an unfamiliar, inhospitable world of military occupation, arbitrary arrest, harrowing experiences of houses demolished and land expropriated, torture ("moderate physical pressure") and sheer brute force generously, if cruelly, applied (e.g., an Israeli soldier refusing to let people through a roadblock on the West Bank because, he says, revealing an enormous, threatening set of teeth, of THIS, the M-16 rifle he brandishes) at whose mercy Palestinians live on a daily, indeed hourly basis.

There's no obvious spin, no easily discernible line of doctrine in Joe Sacco's often ironic encounters with Palestinians under occupation, no attempt to smooth out what is for the most part a meager, anxious existence of uncertainty, collective unhappiness, and deprivation, and, especially in the Gaza comics, a life of aimless wandering within the place's inhospitable confines, wandering and mostly waiting, waiting, waiting. With the exception of one or two novelists and poets, no one has ever rendered this terrible state of affairs better than Joe Sacco. Certainly his images are more graphic than anything you can either read or see on television. With his friend, the

Japanese photographer Saburo (who seems to get lost at one point), Joe is a listening, watchful presence, sometimes skeptical, sometimes fed up, but mostly sympathetic and funny, as he notes that a cup of Palestinian tea is often drowned in sugar, or how perhaps involuntarily they congregate in order to exchange tales of woe and suffering, the way fishermen compare the size of their catch or hunters the stealth of their prey.

The cast of characters in the many episodes collected here is wondrously varied and, with the comic draughtsman's uncanny ability to catch the telling detail, a carefully sculpted mustache here, overly large teeth there, a drab suit here, Sacco manages to keep it all going with almost careless virtuosity. The unhurried pace and the absence of a goal in his wanderings emphasizes that he is neither a journalist in search of a story nor an expert trying to nail down the facts in order to produce a policy. Joe is there to be in Palestine, and only that — in effect to spend as much time as he can sharing, if not finally living the life that Palestinians are condemned to lead. Given the realities of power and his identification with the underdog, Sacco's Israelis are depicted with an unmistakable skepticism, if not always distrust. Mostly they are figures of unjust power and dubious authority. I am not referring only to obviously unattractive personages like the many soldiers and settlers who keep popping up to make life for Palestinians difficult and deliberately unbearable but, especially in one telling episode, even the so-called peaceniks whose support for Palestinian rights appears so hedged, so timid, and finally ineffective as to make them also objects of disappointed scorn.

Joe is there to find out why things are the way they are and why there seems to have been an impasse for so long. He is drawn to the place partly because (we learn from an exceptionally weird earlier comic *War Junkie*) of his Maltese family background during World War Two, partly because the post-modern world is so accessible to the young and curious American, partly because like Joseph Conrad's Marlow he is tugged at by the forgotten places and people of the world, those who don't make it on to our television screens, or if they do, who are regularly portrayed as marginal, unimportant, perhaps even negligible were it not for their nuisance value which, like the Palestinians, seems impossible to get rid of. Without losing the comics' unique capacity for delivering a kind of surreal world as animated and in its own way as arrestingly violent as a poet's vision of things, Joe Sacco can also unostentatiously transmit a great deal of information, the human context and historical events that have reduced Palestinians to their present sense of stagnating powerlessness, despite the peace process and despite the sticky gloss put on things by basically hypocritical leaders, policy-makers and media pundits.

Nowhere does Sacco come closer to the existential lived reality of the average Palestinian than in his depiction of life in Gaza, the national Inferno. The vacancy of time, the drabness not to say sordidness of everyday life in the refugee camps, the network of relief workers, bereaved mothers, unemployed young men, teachers, police, hangers-on, the ubiquitous tea or coffee circle, the sense of confinement, permanent muddiness and ugliness conveyed by the refugee camp which is so

iconic to the whole Palestinian experience: these are rendered with almost terrifying accuracy and, paradoxically enough, gentleness at the same time. Joe the character is there sympathetically to understand and to try to experience not only why Gaza is so representative a place in its hopelessly overcrowded and yet rootless spaces of Palestinian dispossession, but also to affirm that it is there, and must somehow be accounted for in human terms, in the narrative sequences with which any reader can identify.

If you pay attention therefore you will note the scrupulous rendering of the generations, how children and adults make their choices and live their meager lives, how some speak and some remain silent, how they are dressed in the drab sweaters, miscellaneous jackets, and warm *hattas* of an improvised life, on the fringes of their homeland in which they have become that saddest and most powerless and contradictory of creatures, the unwelcome alien. You can see this all in a sense through Joe's own eyes as he moves and tarries among them, attentive, unaggressive, caring, ironic, and so his visual testimony becomes himself, himself so to speak in his own comics, in an act of the profoundest solidarity. Above all, his Gaza series animates and confirms what three other remarkable witnesses before him, all of them women, have written about (one of them Israeli, another one American-Jewish, a third one an American with no previous connection with the Middle East) so unforgettably: Amira Hass, the brave Israeli *Ha'aretz* correspondent who lived in and wrote about Gaza for four years, Sara Roy, who wrote the definitive study of how Gaza's economy was de-developed, and Gloria Emerson, prize-winning journalist and novelist who gave a year of her time to live among the people of Gaza.

But what finally makes Sacco so unusual a portrayer of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is that his true concern is finally history's victims. Recall that most of the comics we read almost routinely conclude with someone's victory, the triumph of good over evil, or the routing of the unjust by the just, or even the marriage of two young lovers. Superman's villains get thrown out and we hear of and see them no more. Tarzan foils the plans of evil white men and they are shipped out of Africa in disgrace. Sacco's *Palestine* is not at all like that. The people he lives among are history's losers, banished to the fringes where they seem so despondently to loiter, without much hope or organization, except for their sheer indomitability, their mostly unspoken will to go on, and their willingness to cling to their story, to retell it, and to resist designs to sweep them away altogether. Astutely, Sacco seems to distrust militancy, particularly of the collective sort that bursts out in slogans or verbal flag-waving. Neither does he try to provide *solutions* of the kind that have made such a mockery of the Oslo peace process. But his comics about Palestine furnish his readers with a long enough sojourn among a people whose suffering and unjust fate have been scanted for far too long and with too little humanitarian and political attention. Sacco's art has the power to detain us, to keep us from impatiently wandering off in order to follow a catch-phrase or a lamentably predictable narrative of triumph and fulfillment. And this is perhaps the greatest of his achievements.

Author's Foreword

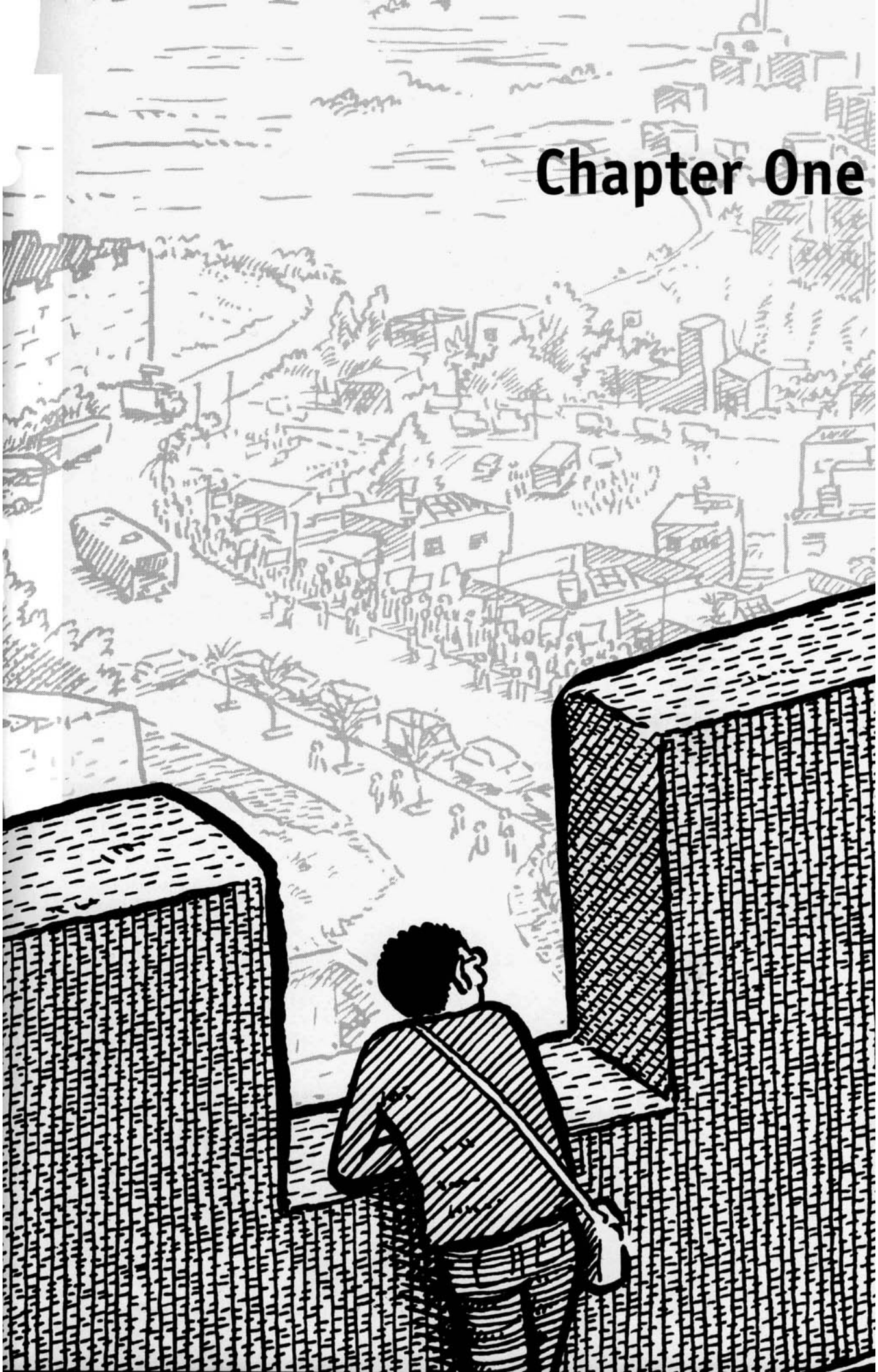
to the complete edition of *Palestine*

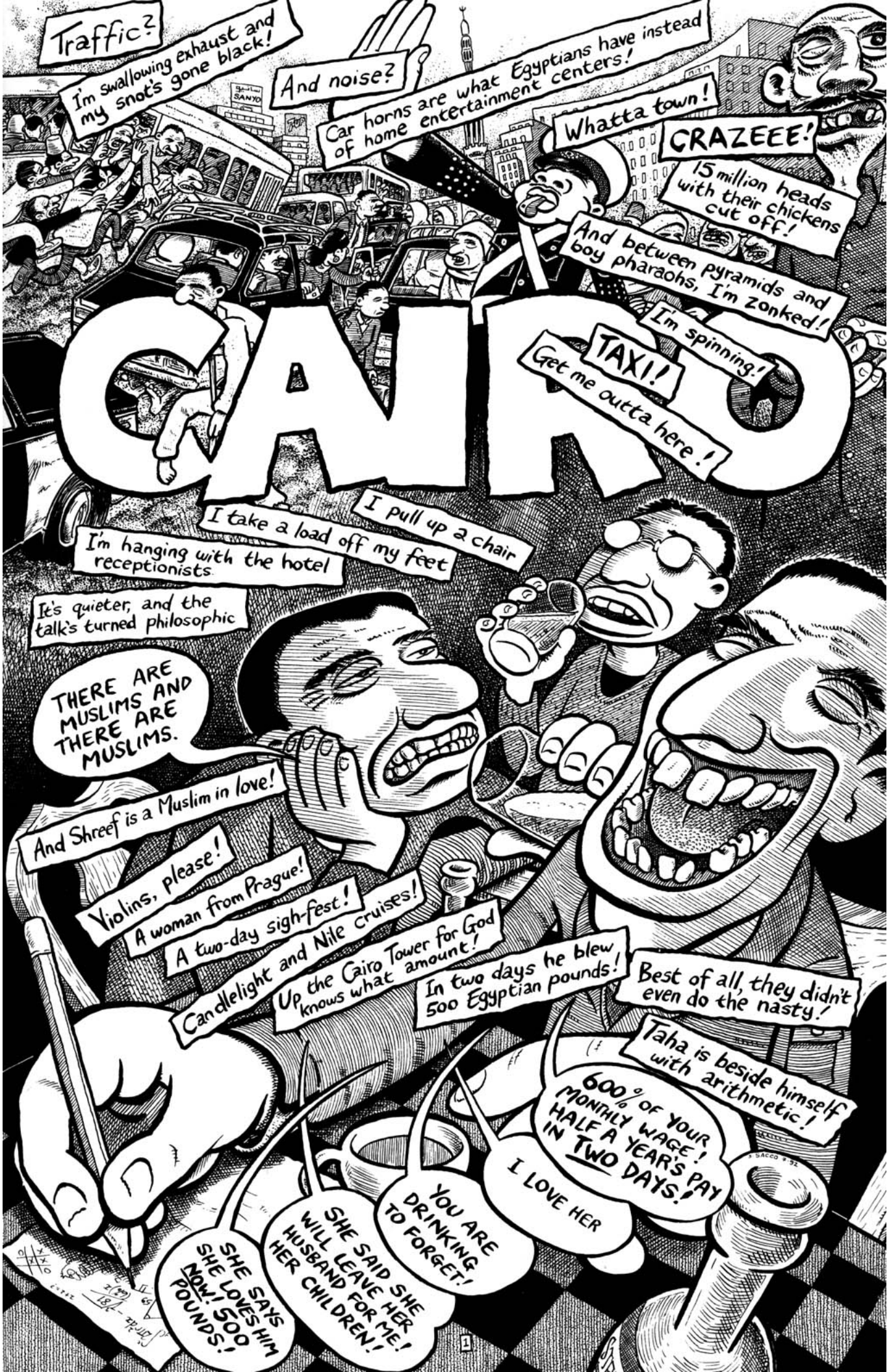
This book collects all nine issues of a comic book series called *Palestine* under one cover for the first time. Previously, the series had been collected in two volumes. I wrote and drew *Palestine* after spending two months in the Occupied Territories almost ten years ago in the winter of 1991-92. Since that visit, a "peace process" was initiated, culminating in a number of agreements or near-agreements — some highly touted as "breakthrough" — and the installation of a Palestine Authority headed by Yasser Arafat in some areas from which the Israelis have withdrawn. While Nobel Peace Prizes have been awarded, no major outstanding issues — the return of or compensation for Palestinian refugees, the illegal Jewish settlements, the status of Jerusalem — have been resolved. (As far as the settlers go, they have continued to add to their number by the tens of thousands.) But even if you skip over those difficult points — and you can't — the "peace process" has not provided the Palestinian people living in territory conquered by Israel in 1967 with many tangible benefits. In fact, their land is still expropriated, their dwellings are still bulldozed, their olive groves are still uprooted. They still encounter an occupying army, as well as the settlers, who are often the armed adjuncts to the occupying army (or vice versa, it's hard to tell sometimes). Through closures and the lasting effect of long-term strangulation by Israel of the Palestinian economy, the lives of Palestinian workers and their families have been made even more wretched than they were when this work was first published. One must add the mismanagement and corruption of the Palestine Authority into the unfortunate mix.

This book is about the first intifada against the Israeli occupation, which was beginning to run out of steam at the time of my visit. As I write these words, a second intifada is taking place because, in short, Israeli occupation, and all the consequences of the domination of one people by another, has not ceased. The Palestinian and Israeli people will continue to kill each other in low-level conflict or with shattering violence — with suicide bombers or helicopter gunships and jet bombers — until this central fact — Israeli occupation — is addressed as an issue of international law and basic human rights.

Joe Sacco
July 2001

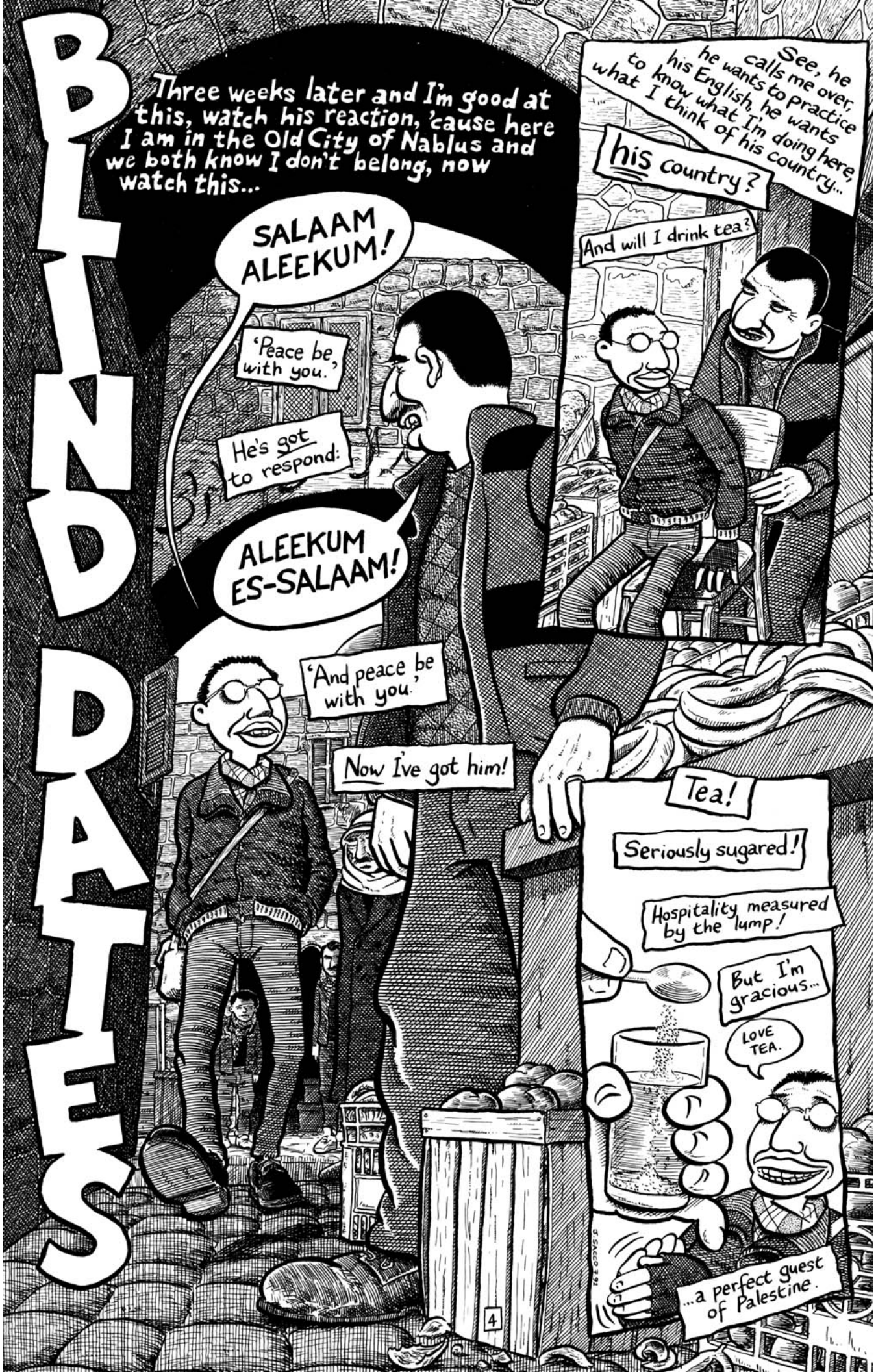
Chapter One



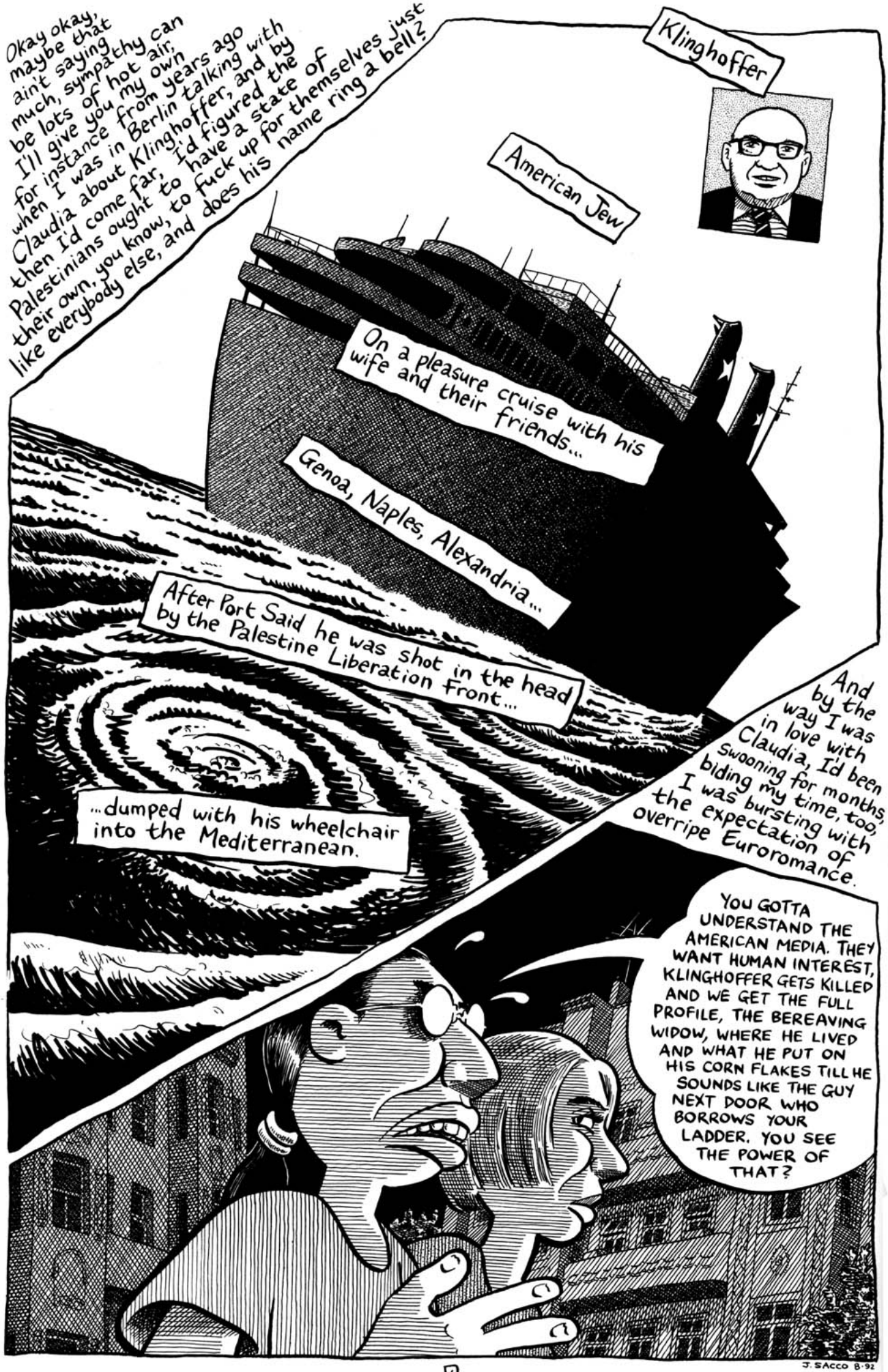

Traffic?
I'm swallowing exhaust and my snot's gone black!
And noise?
Car horns are what Egyptians have instead of home entertainment centers!
Whatta town!
CRAZEEE!
15 million heads with their chickens cut off!
And between pyramids and boy pharaohs, I'm zonked!
I'm spinning!
TAXI!
Get me outta here!
CAIRO
I take a load off my feet
I pull up a chair
I'm hanging with the hotel receptionists
It's quieter, and the talk's turned philosophic
THERE ARE MUSLIMS AND THERE ARE MUSLIMS.
And Shreef is a Muslim in love!
Violins, please!
A woman from Prague!
A two-day sigh-fest!
Candlelight and Nile cruises!
Up the Cairo Tower for God knows what amount!
In two days he blew 500 Egyptian pounds!
Best of all, they didn't even do the nasty!
Taha is beside himself with arithmetic!
600% OF YOUR MONTHLY WAGE! HALF A YEAR'S PAY IN TWO DAYS!
I LOVE HER
YOU ARE DRINKING TO FORGET!
SHE SAID SHE WILL LEAVE HER HUSBAND FOR ME! HER CHILDREN!
SHE SAYS SHE LOVES HIM NOW! 500 POUNDS!
J. SACCO '92
1

Shreef looks to me
I am a Westerner
I will understand
I WILL MEET HER IN EUROPE SOME DAY.
He wants to leave Egypt, so that makes two of us
I want a visa for Israel
ISRAEL?
I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THE ISRAELIS
THEY ARE LIKE EUROPEANS
I WOULD SMASH ISRAEL!
Hoo boy! I'm in the Middle East!
FOR THE JEWS TO BE TREATED THE WAY THEY'VE BEEN TREATED AND THEN TO TREAT THE PALESTINIANS IN THAT WAY!
AND IT'S NOT THAT THEY WANT TO LIVE THERE! THEY WANT TO GRAB AND GRAB!
But what about Camp David?
Sadat in Jerusalem?
The hugs from Begin?
HA!
Oops! Pardon me!
J. SACCO © 92
2

SADAT WAS A VERY INTELLIGENT MAN! HE KNEW ISRAEL WAS STRONG THEN, BUT IN 50 YEARS...?
SADAT HAD A PLAN!
Taha unwinds Sadat's plan
It's a little convoluted
I don't quite follow the tank tactics
Meanwhile, Shreef has compiled a list of his favorite rock:
BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST... PINK FLOYD ... GEORGE MICHAEL ... DEEP PURPLE...
SEE THAT?!
HE'S CHANGED THE CONVERSATION!
THAT'S WHAT HE KNOWS HOW TO TALK ABOUT!
HOW MUCH DO YOU SPEND ON BOOKS?
I AM A POOR MAN AND I SPEND 30 POUNDS A MONTH ON BOOKS!
AND YOU SPEND 500 POUNDS ON HER IN TWO DAYS!
SHE LOVES ME.
LOVE? HA! SHE WOULD LEAVE HER CHILDREN?!
A couple of days later I get my visa and I leave Cairo
Across the Suez and into the Sinai
We pass tanks twisted and burned out since when?
'73?
'67?
'56?
The bus stops a lot, the bus drivers jumping out to have words with each other and the escort
It's a long way to Palestine and slow going
But I've been speeding, man
I've been speeding
I'm already there
3

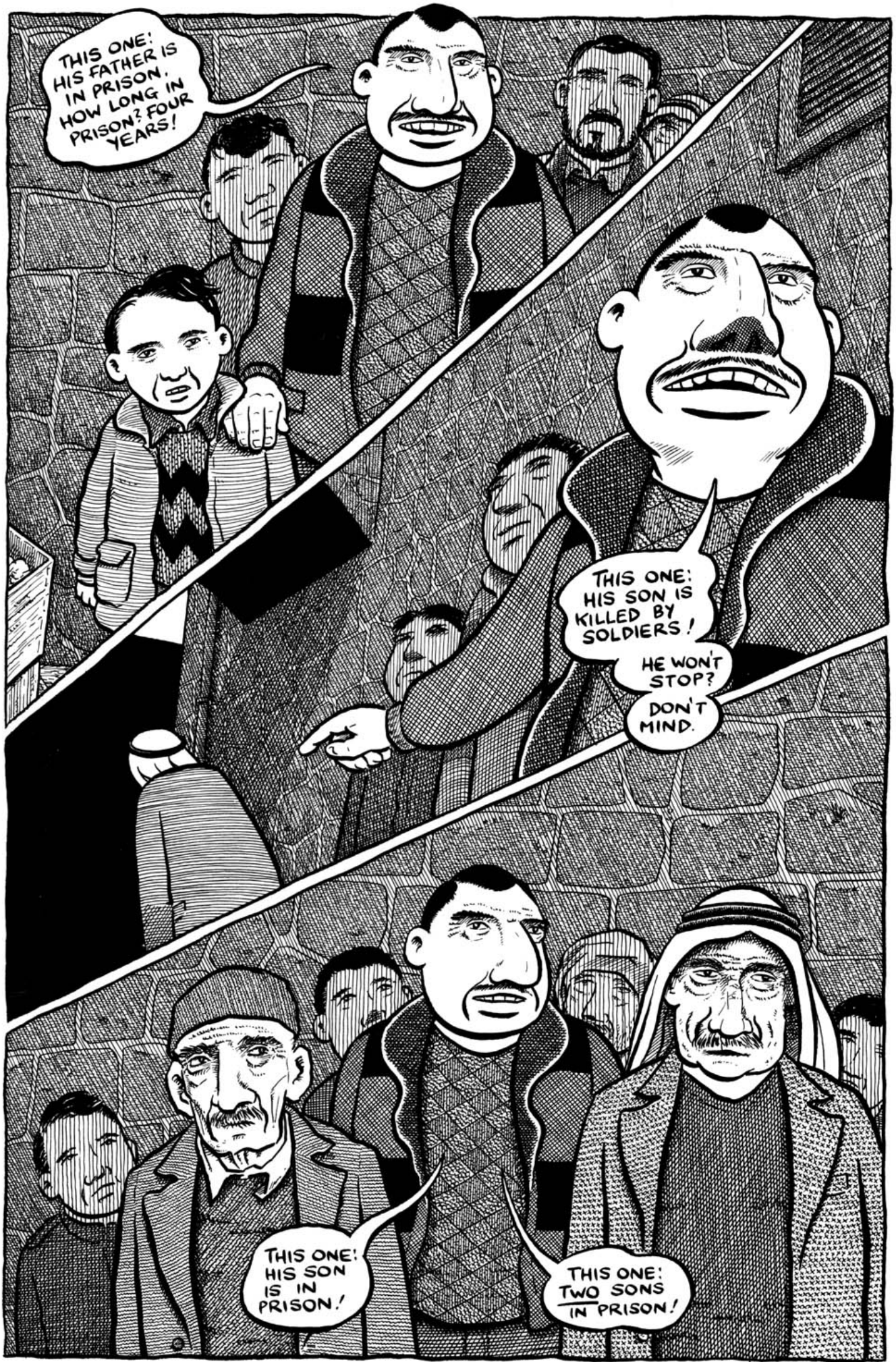

BLIND DATES
Three weeks later and I'm good at this, watch his reaction, 'cause here I am in the Old City of Nablus and we both know I don't belong, now watch this...
SALAAM ALEEKUM!
'Peace be with you.'
He's got to respond:
ALEEKUM ES-SALAAM!
'And peace be with you.'
Now I've got him!
See, he calls me over, he wants to practice his English, he wants to know what I'm doing here, what I think of his country...
his country?
And will I drink tea?
Tea!
Seriously sugared!
Hospitality measured by the lump!
But I'm gracious...
LOVE TEA.
...a perfect guest of Palestine.
J. SACCO 1991
4

BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY COUNTRY?
Back to that again, are we?
Okay okay...
THE HILLS!
It's not what he's fishing for...
THE OLIVE TREES!
...but I'm a charmer...
THE TERRACED FIELDS!
...a real innocent...
...and, by the way, not with Israeli intelligence.
But in case he hasn't heard...
THIS OCCUPATION THING LOOKS PRETTY HARSH.
Whamo!!
I've committed myself now!
I'm no longer beating about the bush!
I've hit his nail on the head, too!
YES...
BUT WHAT CAN WE DO?
Indeed!
My point precisely!
You've got my sympathies and—
J. SACCO P. 21
5

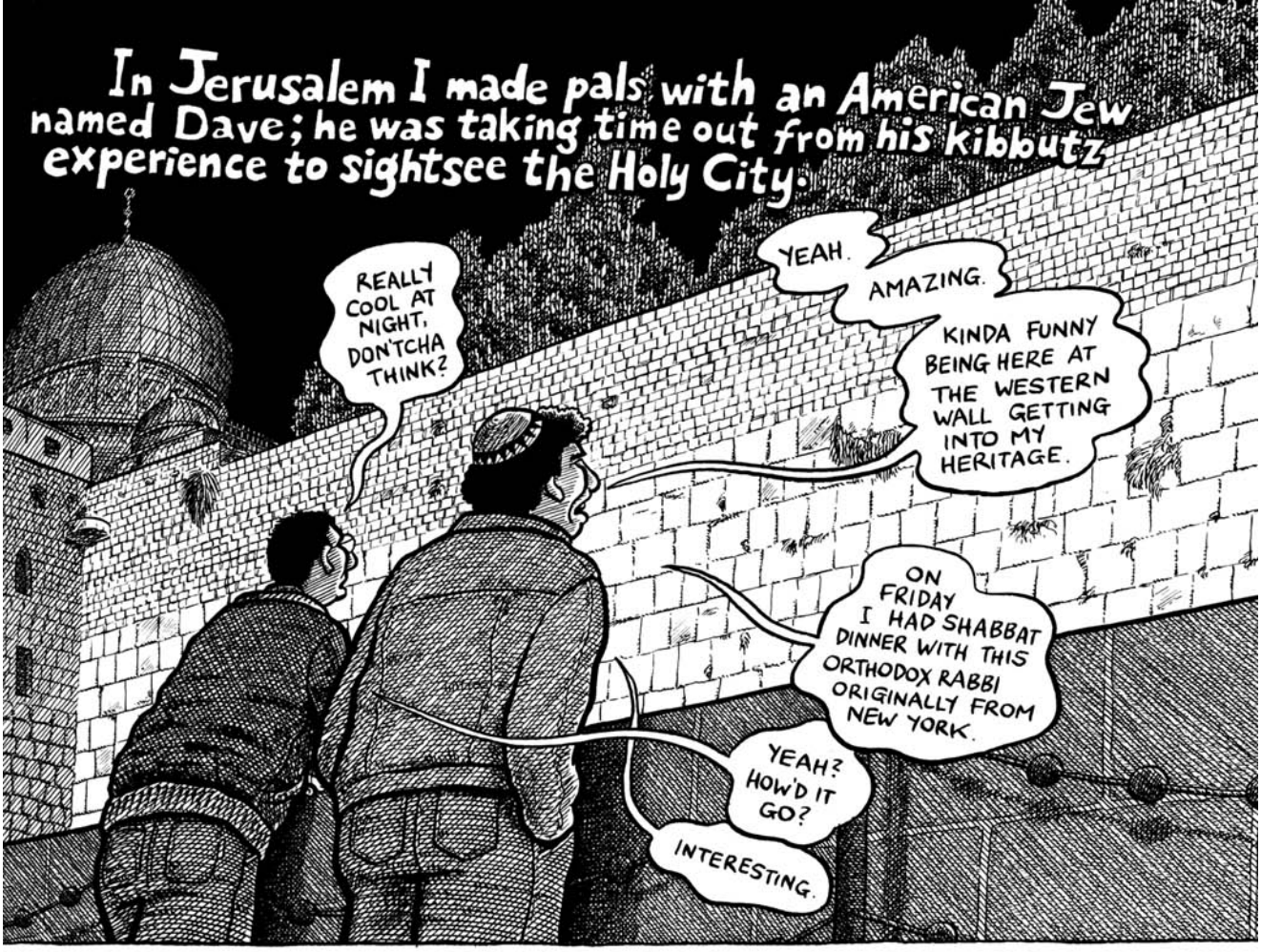

Okay okay, maybe that ain't saying much, sympathy can be lots of hot air, I'll give you my own for instance from years ago when I was in Berlin talking with Claudia about Klinghoffer, and by then I'd come far, I'd figured the Palestinians ought to have a state of their own, you know, to fuck up for themselves just like everybody else, and does his name ring a bell?
Klinghoffer
American Jew
On a pleasure cruise with his wife and their friends...
Genoa, Naples, Alexandria...
After Port Said he was shot in the head by the Palestine Liberation Front...
...dumped with his wheelchair into the Mediterranean.
And by the way I was in love with Claudia, I'd been swooning for months, biding my time, too, I was bursting with the expectation of overripe Euroromance.
YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND THE AMERICAN MEDIA. THEY WANT HUMAN INTEREST, KLINGHOFFER GETS KILLED AND WE GET THE FULL PROFILE, THE BEREAVING WIDOW, WHERE HE LIVED AND WHAT HE PUT ON HIS CORN FLAKES TILL HE SOUNDS LIKE THE GUY NEXT DOOR WHO BORROWS YOUR LADDER. YOU SEE THE POWER OF THAT?
J. SACCO 8-92

It was far into the a.m., we'd been drinking, and Claudia, who was half Iraqi, who'd studied Arabic in Damascus where she'd left her Palestinian Romeo whose brother in the PLO was on first names with Yasser – Claudia may or may not have said something of interest at that point...
You better believe I did:
AMERICANS WON'T CARE ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF PALESTINIANS WHEN AMERICANS GET KILLED IN THESE TERRORIST ATTACKS. ONE AMERICAN DIES LIKE THAT, IT ECLIPSES ANYTHING PALESTINIANS HAVE TO SAY!
WELL...
I DON'T KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT THESE THINGS...
I knew she did, but...
Conversation over!
A peck on the cheek and—
I went home alone
PALESTINIAN BOYFRIEND! HA! BITCH! TERRORIST GROUPIE!
Unfair? You bet, but I couldn't get the taste out of my mouth, terrorism is the bread Palestinians get buttered on, I'd swallowed that ever since the airliners went sky high in the desert, do you remember that, do you remember Munich and the blown up athletes, the bus and airport massacres?
J. SACCO 8'92

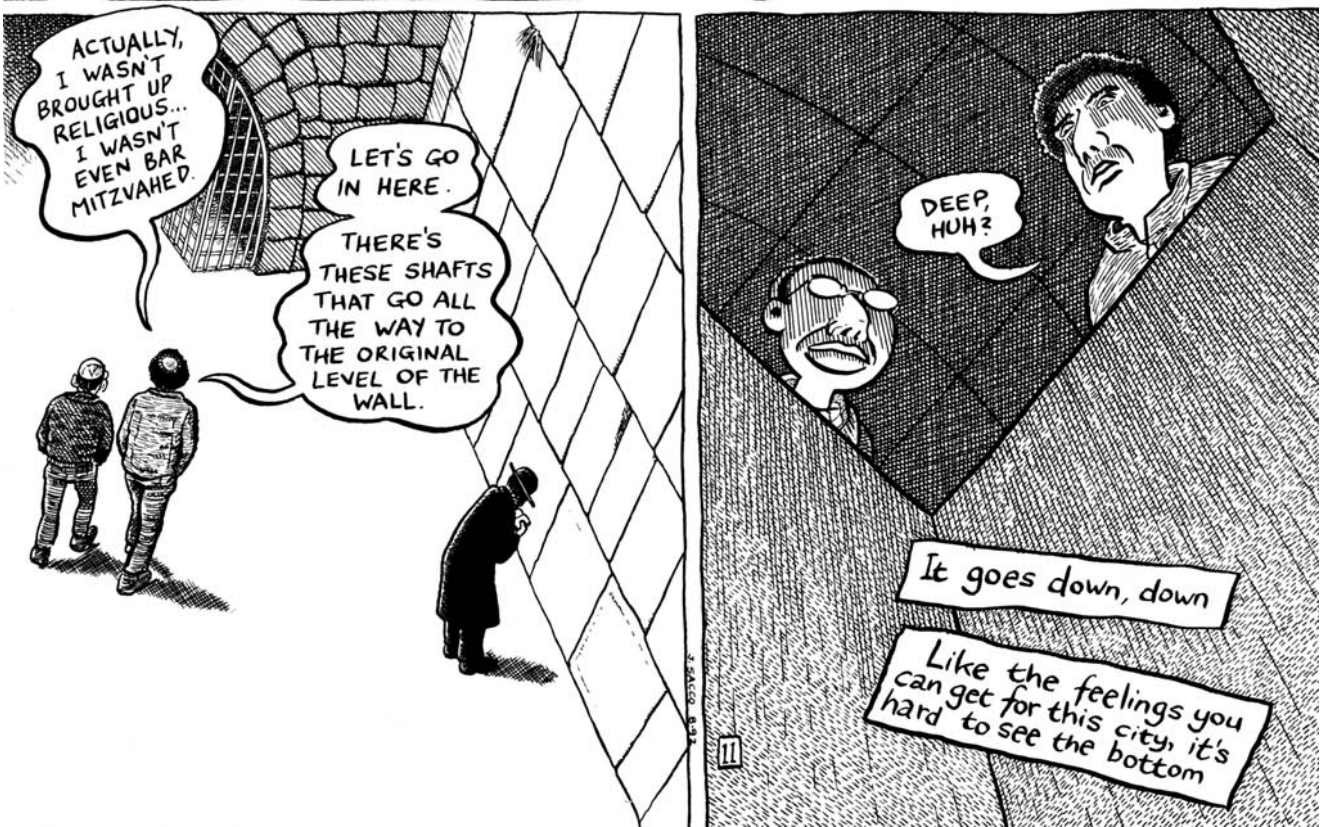
I do, my mind gurgles over with televised pools of blood... I mean sure I had sympathy for a homeland lost, but what were the problems of Palestinians to me next to Klinghoffer, who ate Brand X corn flakes and probably borrowed my ladder...
He went over the side of the Achille Lauro and into my consciousness.
And if Palestinians have been sinking for decades, expelled, bombed and kicked black and blue, even when it's made the evening news I never caught a name or recall a face, to say nothing about their corn flakes. But now my buddy on the West Bank wants to make some introductions, to set me up, he wants me to shake hands with his people's pain...
THIS WOMAN, SHE HAS EIGHT CHILDREN. HER HUSBAND VERY OLD, VERY SICK. THE GOVERNMENT GIVES HER NOTHING!
J. SACCO 8-92


THIS ONE! HIS FATHER IS IN PRISON. HOW LONG IN PRISON? FOUR YEARS!
THIS ONE: HIS SON IS KILLED BY SOLDIERS!
HE WON'T STOP?
DON'T MIND.
THIS ONE: HIS SON IS IN PRISON!
THIS ONE: TWO SONS IN PRISON!
J. SACCO 8-92

Palestinian victims all right!
The real-life adaptation of all those affidavits I've been reading!
The flesh and blood stuff!
Up close and almost personal!
But it's time for me to go!..
Now he's thanking my ass!
He's touched!
I've come all this way!
YOU WRITE SOMETHING ABOUT US?
I SHOWED YOU, YOU SAW!
YOU TELL ABOUT US?
Of course of course!
I'm off to fill my notebook!
I will alert the world to your suffering!
Watch your local comic-book store...
I walk back to where the taxis are waiting.
Mission accomplished!
Told you I was good at this!


In Jerusalem I made pals with an American Jew named Dave; he was taking time out from his kibbutz experience to sightsee the Holy City.
REALLY COOL AT NIGHT, DON'TCHA THINK?
YEAH. AMAZING.
KINDA FUNNY BEING HERE AT THE WESTERN WALL GETTING INTO MY HERITAGE.
ON FRIDAY I HAD SHABBAT DINNER WITH THIS ORTHODOX RABBI ORIGINALLY FROM NEW YORK.
YEAH? HOW'D IT GO?
INTERESTING.

RETURN

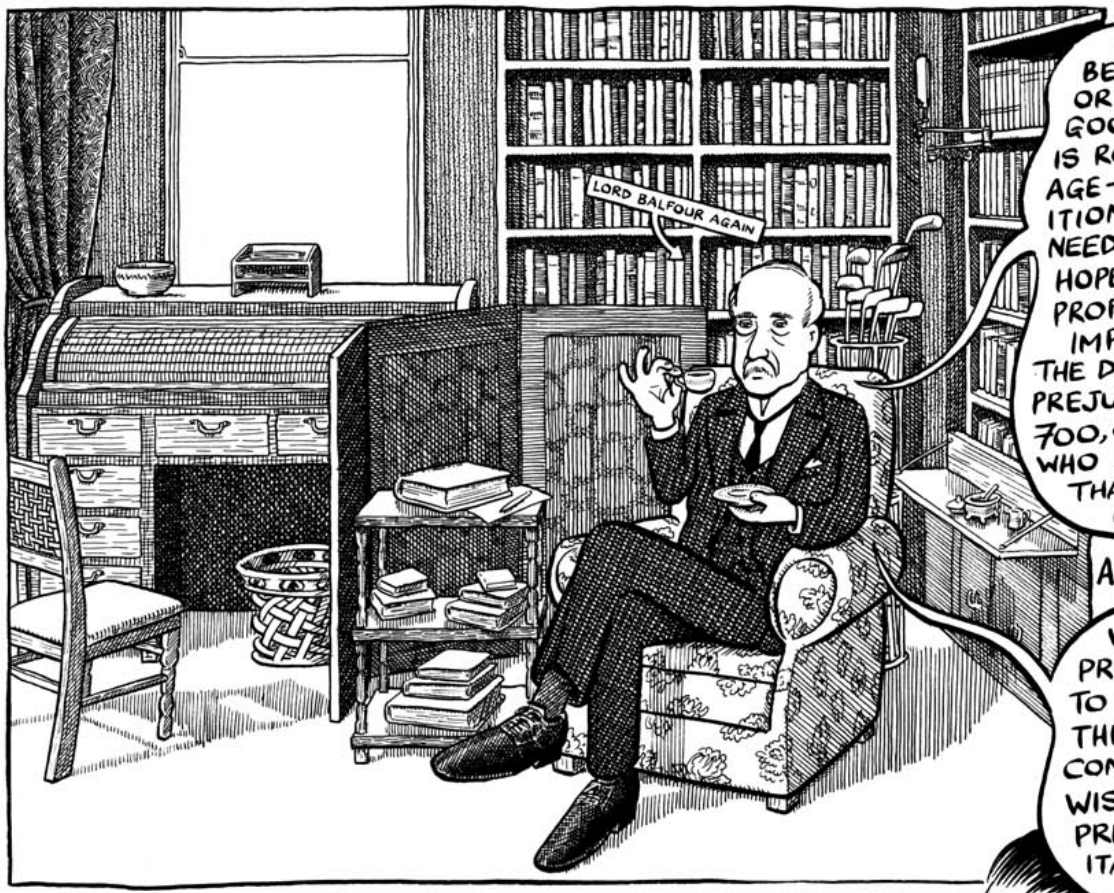

ACTUALLY, I WASN'T BROUGHT UP RELIGIOUS... I WASN'T EVEN BAR MITZVAHED.
LET'S GO IN HERE.
THERE'S THESE SHAFTS THAT GO ALL THE WAY TO THE ORIGINAL LEVEL OF THE WALL.
DEEP, HUH?
It goes down, down
Like the feelings you can get for this city, it's hard to see the bottom
J. SACCO 8.93
11

"Next year, in Jerusalem" —all over the world that's the Jewish toast at Passover, and now here he is, a Jew in Zion, a land promised by God to his chosen people:

And in 1917— after two millennia of Jewish Diaspora— the British dusted off the promise of the Lord. Great Powers had Big Battleships back then, Broad Pen-strokes, too, and plenty of India Ink. Lord Balfour signed his declaration and the Zionists had a British commitment to a homeland in Palestine for the Jews.

J. SACCO 9.92

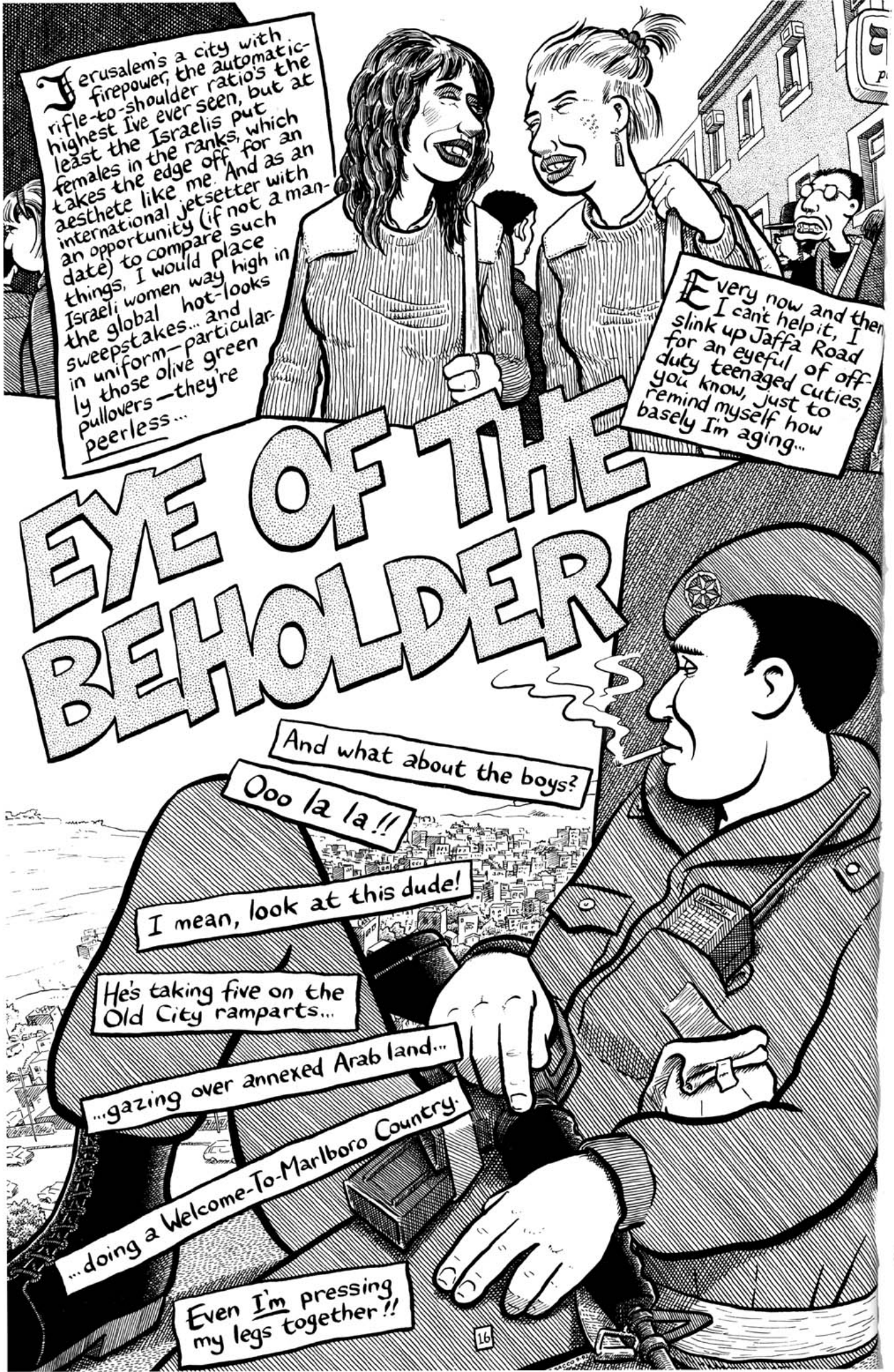
But things weren't as cut and dry as <u>that</u> Zionist slogan. Plenty of Arabs lived in Palestine; in 1917 Arabs outnumbered Jewish inhabitants ten-to-one. But you know mathematics, it doesn't always fit into the equation:



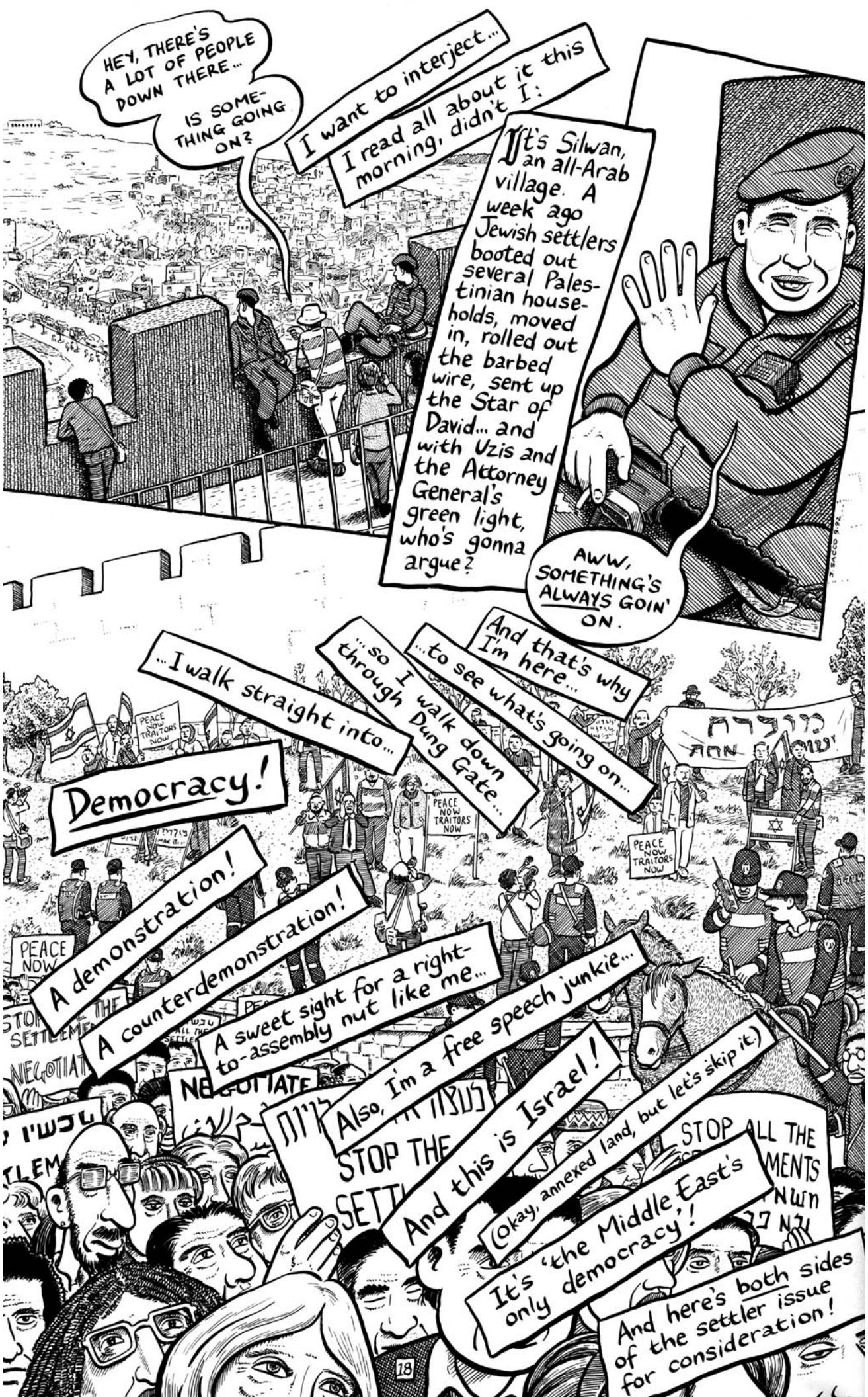
Decision made! History follows on such heels and refugees after that... But if it's been downhill for Palestinians ever since, Israelis have soared to greater heights, who can deny it?

Come over, see for yourself! Like these kids: the International Student Set! The hostel's crawling with 'em! Dutch, Australian, South African ... they're on their way to kibbutzim, they're gonna get communal, they're gonna pick oranges in Galilee or the Negev...
... some who've already done their stint sit around trading vomit stories, especially the English, who won't call it a holiday unless they've puked every night, they say there's nothing to do on them farms after sundown except plow vodka...
But Mary Ann the Argentine hasn't been boozin', she's just come off a three-week Volunteers for Israel program...
... YOU MEAN WITH THE ISRAELI ARMY? SCRUBBING TANKS?
IT'S NOT JUST THAT. IT HELPED ME UNDERSTAND THE CULTURE.
ISRAEL NEEDS A STRONG ARMY. IT'S SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES.
I THINK IT'S SO WONDERFUL HOW YOUNG ISRAELIS HAVE SUCH A SENSE OF THEIR COUNTRY, OF THEIR IDENTITY... I THINK IT'S A BEAUTIFUL THING.
AND WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
Dave's got to think about it...
A weekend in the Holy City and now he's not sure...
ISRAEL AND AMERICA.
WELL, ACTUALLY I'M AN AMERICAN.
BUT THIS FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME.
I AM HOME! I AM HOME! I AM HOME!
And so he is, he's got full Israeli citizenship if he wants, that's the Law of Return, any Jew from anywhere can "return" here ... from Moldavia, from Ethiopia, from Christchurch, New Zealand...
J. SACCO 9.92

Weeks later, in Jabalia refugee camp, I met an old Palestinian who told me about the home he fled in 1948 after Israel declared independence and the Arab armies invaded...
THE JEWS CAME AND OCCUPIED THE VILLAGE AND ARRESTED EVERYONE LEFT BEHIND, INCLUDING MY FATHER, WHO WAS AN OLD MAN AND COULDN'T MOVE...
I WALKED WITH MY WIFE, WHO WAS PREGNANT, FOR FOUR DAYS...
THE EGYPTIAN ARMY REFUSED TO TAKE US IN TRUCKS...
THE JEWS BOMBED US...
EVEN THE ANTS RAN AFTER US...
IT WAS A BLACK DAY WHEN I LEFT MY LAND.
He returned, as it were, a few years ago.
He got a permit from the Israeli authorities.
For a few hours he could leave the Gaza Strip...
He could cross into what is now Israel to visit his home village...
I TOOK MY FAMILY TO SEE MY LAND...
WHERE MY HOUSE WAS AND MY SCHOOL...
SOME PEOPLE ARE PARALYZED AFTER THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO GO BACK AND SEE.
THEY DESTROYED EVERYTHING.
THERE IS NO SIGN THAT WE EVER LIVED THERE.
J. SACCO 9-92


Jerusalem's a city with firepower, the automatic-rifle-to-shoulder ratio's the highest Ive ever seen, but at least the Israelis put females in the ranks, which takes the edge off for an aesthete like me. And as an international jetsetter with an opportunity (if not a mandate) to compare such things, I would place Israeli women way high in the global hot-looks sweepstakes... and in uniform—particularly those olive green pullovers—they're peerless...
Every now and then I can't help it, I slink up Jaffa Road for an eyeful of off-duty teenaged cuties, you know, just to remind myself how basely I'm aging...
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
And what about the boys?
Ooo la la!!
I mean, look at this dude!
He's taking five on the Old City ramparts...
...gazing over annexed Arab land...
...doing a Welcome-To-Marlboro Country.
Even I'm pressing my legs together!!
16

HEY!
YOU AMERICAN?
YEAH, YOU!
YOU WANT PART OF A SANDWICH?
UM... WHERE YOU GUYS FROM?
Ohmy Gawd!!
Is she nervous?
Or plain stoopid?
Either way, our soldier takes it in stride...
WE'RE FROM ISRAEL.
Got that straight?
Now come on!
Let's salvage this flirtation...
HIYA, FELLAHS!
Too late!
Mom and pop's arrival extinguishes all hope...
Sheesh!
Looks like mom's a little smitten herself!
Betcha she's never had beefcake like this on her Fuji Color!
HOW OLD ARE YOU BOYS? YOU SHOULDN'T BE SMOKING.
HOLD IT!
IT'S DANGEROUS FOR YOUR HEALTH. YOU CAN GET CANCER.
HOLD IT!
Big Sur
J. SACCO 3.92
17


HEY, THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE DOWN THERE...
IS SOMETHING GOING ON?
I want to interject...
I read all about it this morning, didn't I:
It's Silwan, an all-Arab village. A week ago Jewish settlers booted out several Palestinian households, moved in, rolled out the barbed wire, sent up the Star of David... and with Uzis and the Attorney General's green light, who's gonna argue?
AWW, SOMETHING'S ALWAYS GOIN' ON.
And that's why I'm here...
...to see what's going on...
...so I walk down through Dung Gate...
...I walk straight into...
Democracy!
A demonstration!
A counterdemonstration!
A sweet sight for a right-to-assembly nut like me...
Also, I'm a free speech junkie...
And this is Israel!
(Okay, annexed land, but let's skip it.)
It's 'the Middle East's only democracy'!
And here's both sides of the settler issue for consideration!
PEACE NOW TRAITORS NOW
PEACE NOW
NEGOTIATE
STOP THE SETTLEMENTS
18

By far the more numerous end of this afternoon's political spectrum is the Peace Now crowd, they've bussed in from all over Israel to express solidarity with the Palestinians of Silwan. I fall in with one of them...
MAYBE THESE SETTLERS DID IT LEGALLY, I DON'T KNOW, BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT.
IT'S A PROVOCATION, THAT'S OBVIOUS...
...AND RIGHT WHEN PEACE TALKS ARE STARTING UP...
Sure, he says, Israel should get out of the Occupied Territories, and there ought to be a Palestinian state...
...AND IF IT DOESN'T HAPPEN IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS, IT'LL BE IN 20 OR 30...
Meanwhile, like most able-bodied Israeli men up till late middle age, he's required to do several weeks a year in the reserves, including duty in the West Bank...
The Democracy continues around us...
It's a pretty day for a peaceful Peace Now demonstration...
And, by the way, let's make one thing clear:
HOW DO YOU RECONCILE YOUR POLITICAL VIEWS WITH BEING A MEMBER OF AN OCCUPYING ARMY?
I KNOW PEOPLE WHO REFUSED TO SERVE THERE AND WENT TO JAIL, BUT IT'S GOOD THERE ARE GUYS LIKE ME IN.
ARABS IN THE TERRITORIES DON'T GET JUSTICE, BUT IF I REPORT SOME HOTHEAD SOLDIER WHO DOES SOMETHING ILLEGAL, THAT SETS THE WHEELS IN MOTION...
HE COULD GET IN TROUBLE, EXPELLED FROM THE ARMY... HEAVY PUNISHMENT FOR A GUY THAT MAKES THE ARMY HIS LIFE.
LOOK, I'M A ZIONIST AND I BELIEVE IN A STRONG ISRAEL.
IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE STRONG THE ARABS HAVE GIVEN UP ON THROWING US INTO THE SEA...
THEY'RE READY TO NEGOTIATE NOW.
ALL THE SETTLEMENTS
NEGOTIATE NOW
J. SACCO 992
19

A little later the Democracy's all but over...
People are heading back home to watch themselves on T.V.
Palestinian kids go through the crowd sweet-talking Peace Now protesters out of their signs.
I'm halfway up the hill when I hear shouting...
J. Sacco 1992
A mini-demonstration!
maybe 50 people
some kids, some women
They march a few dozen yards...
...chanting their heads off...
...raising more decibels in two minutes than I've heard all afternoon...
I mean, they're screaming like their lives depended on it!
STOP SETTLEMENTS
NEGOTIATE NOW
20

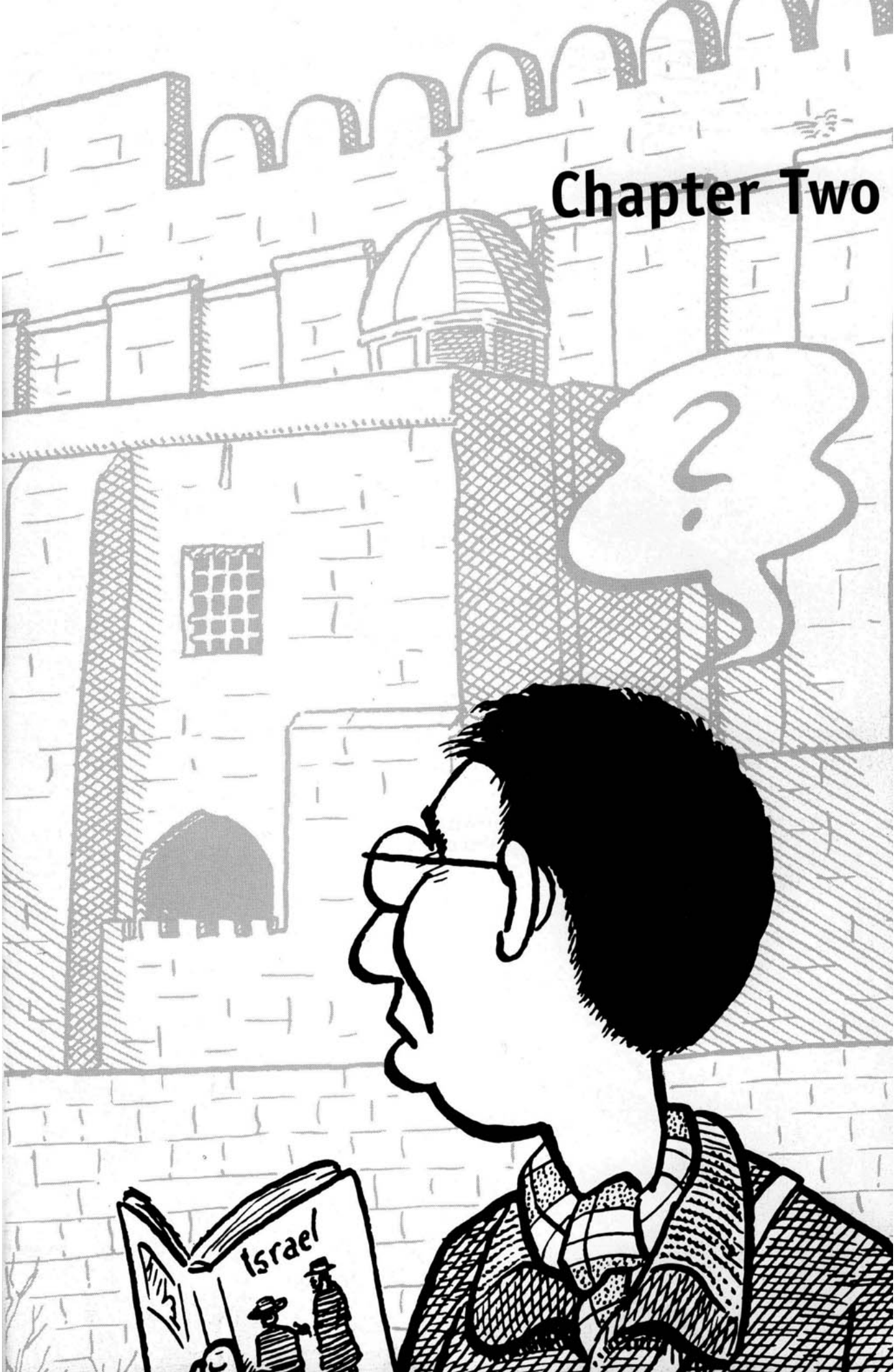
VALLEY of KIDRON
HALLO!
HELLO!
JEWISH? JEWISH?
ME? NO, NOT JEWISH.
YOU COME? YOU COME?
DOWN THERE? YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING!
YES! COME! COME!
YOU SPEAK JEWISH?
NO!
NICE? NICE?
YOU SPEAK JEWISH?
NO! OKAY, I KNOW SOME WORDS: SHALOM, KIBBUTZ, KNESSET.
J. SACCO 89
21

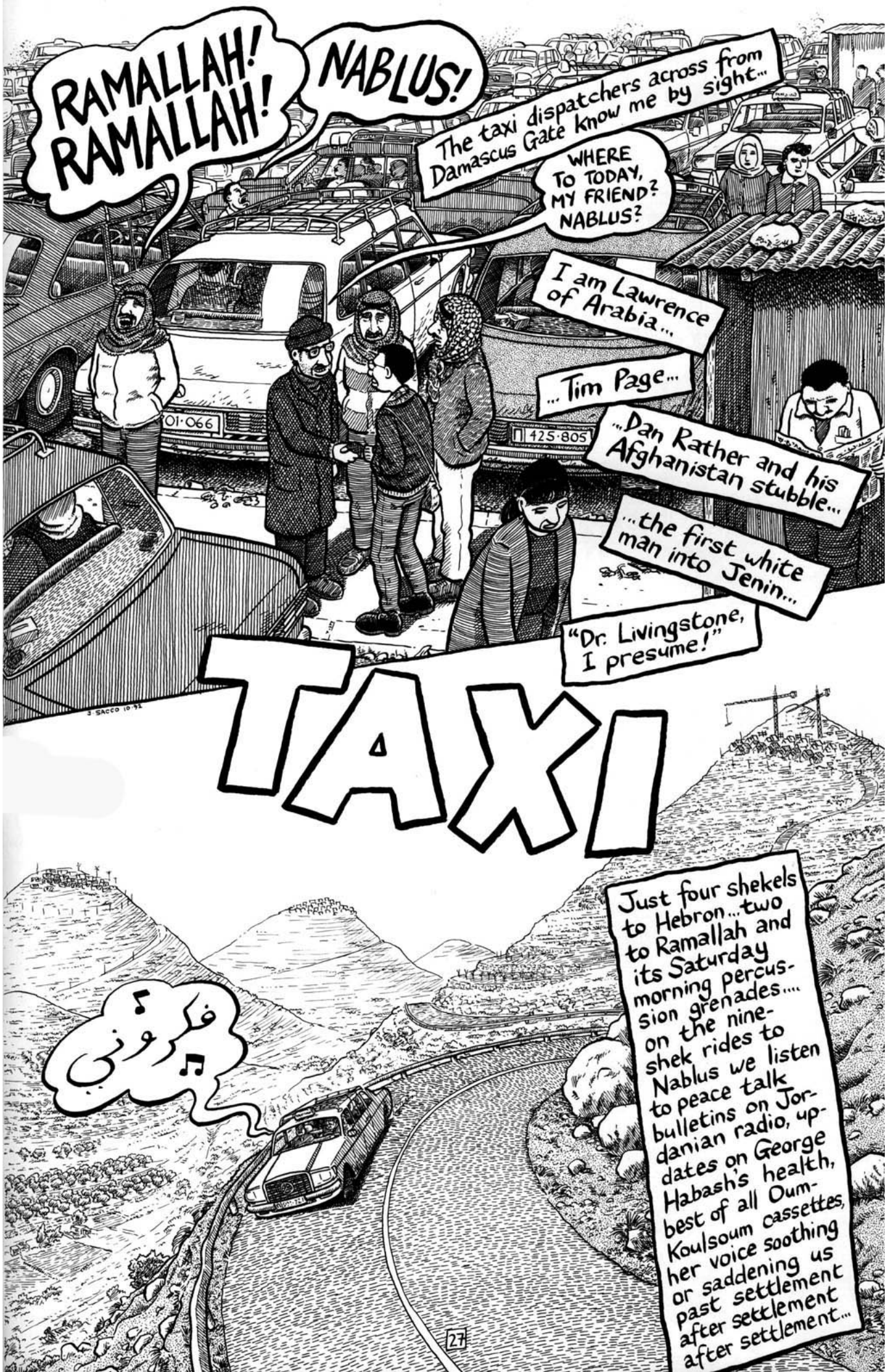
The chubby kid says he's from Silwan. He says settlers kicked him out, his family.
THEY CAME TO YOUR HOME? WHAT DID THEY SAY?
OUT! OUT! GO!
He motions like he's been hit.
WHERE DO YOU STAY NOW?
HIM.
JEWISH!
COME! COME!
HOUSE!
A settlement.
JEWISH!
HEY, IT'S KINDA MUDDY OUT HERE.
J. SACCO 8-91

Then...
Birds up a tree!
The boys turn to scoop stones!
They want to bust a bird's brains in!
The birds make their getaway, and the boys don't notice!
But there's no stopping 'em!
They scoop!
Fire!
Scoop!
Fire!
Scoop!
Fire!
Scoop!
Fire!
Nice kids, you know, but they're beginning to bore me. I say my goodbyes and...
MONEY!
MONEY?
TEN!
TEN SHEKELS?! BUT I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS!
WE SHOW YOU! WE SHOW YOU!
BUT YOU DIDN'T SAY FOR MONEY!
LOOKIT, HERE'S THREE AND A HALF!
NO! NO!
They won't take it! They close my fist over the coins...
HERE! HERE!
TEN! FIVE ME! FIVE HIM!
BUT THIS ISN'T FAIR...
J. SACCO 8-92
23

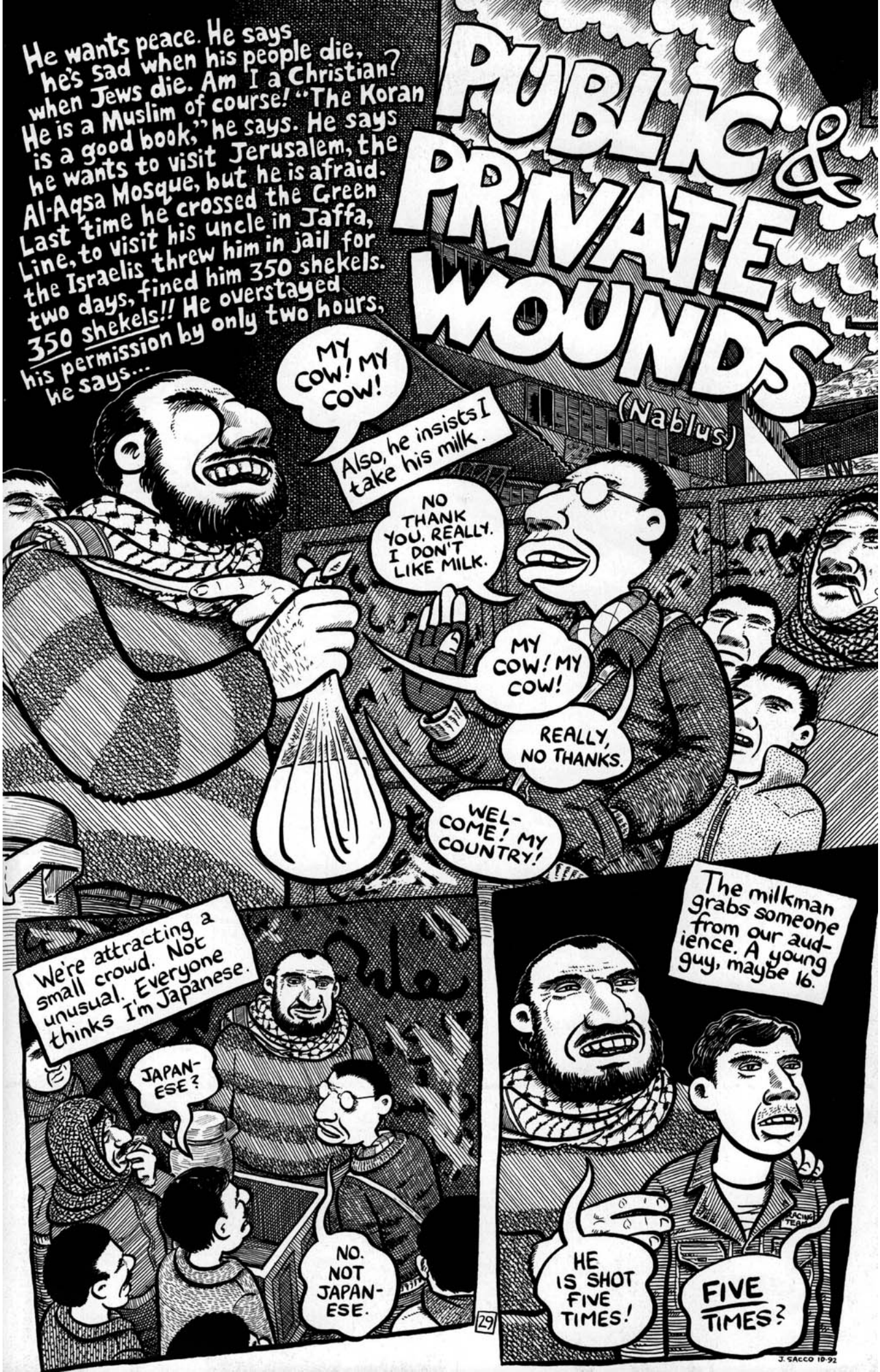
I cough up a few more coins...
They let me go...
WE ARE BAD?
WE ARE BAD?
You think I tell them they're bad?
You think I tell them off?
Those little terrorists?
After that artillery display?
FUCKING KIDS! THE FAT BASTARD ESPECIALLY! PROBABLY WASN'T FROM SILWAN! PROBABLY RIPPED ME ON THAT, TOO! GODDAMN PIPSQUEEK ASSHOLES... GODDAMN BRATS...
Back in Jerusalem's Old City I walk by Palestinian shopkeepers...
They get me sick...
Their big, sad eyes...
Their empty pockets...
I want to kick them...
SHAKE HANDS! SHAKE HANDS!
Fat chance, buddy! I know that bull-shit from Cairo...
SEE! HE DOESN'T WANT PEACE!
24

Chapter Two




RAMALLAH! RAMALLAH!
NABLUS!
The taxi dispatchers across from Damascus Gate know me by sight...
WHERE TO TODAY, MY FRIEND? NABLUS?
I am Lawrence of Arabia...
...Tim Page...
...Dan Rather and his Afghanistan stubble...
...the first white man into Jenin...
"Dr. Livingstone, I presume!"
01·066
425·805
J SACCO 10·92
TAXI
فكروني
Just four shekels to Hebron...two to Ramallah and its Saturday morning percussion grenades.... on the nine-shek rides to Nablus we listen to peace talk bulletins on Jordanian radio, updates on George Habash's health, best of all Oum-Koulsoum cassettes, her voice soothing or saddening us past settlement after settlement after settlement...
27

I love the now-and-then intimacies with fellow passengers, the shared candy, the anecdotes about prisons and beatings, once a student of electrical engineering pressed me on scholarships in the States...
WELL, I DON'T KNOW, REALLY. I COULD FIND OUT. MY DAD'S AN ENGINEER.
YES! WHATEVER YOU CAN DO! I MUST GET OUT OF HERE!
Out of here?
Out of this?
He scribbled his address, I put it in my pocket and forgot about him forever...
The taxi gets where we're going.
I walk around.
I buy a falafel.
Someone starts talking to me...
...shows me around...
Something happens...
Something always happens...
Take off your pants!
In the evening I'm back in Jerusalem, maybe at the Underground club in the New City, watching Tom and Jerry brain each other on the video screen, I'm shaking my bootie in front of off-duty paratroopers with the Dutch and Swedish girls from the hostel...
And if it's too much, if the scene gets too heavy, if my stomach's knotting up, I jump into a taxi...
...and I'm outta there, man!
28


PUBLIC & PRIVATE WOUNDS
(Nablus)
He wants peace. He says he's sad when his people die, when Jews die. Am I a Christian? He is a Muslim of course! "The Koran is a good book," he says. He says he wants to visit Jerusalem, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, but he is afraid. Last time he crossed the Green Line, to visit his uncle in Jaffa, the Israelis threw him in jail for two days, fined him 350 shekels. 350 shekels!! He overstayed his permission by only two hours, he says...
MY COW! MY COW!
Also, he insists I take his milk.
NO THANK YOU. REALLY. I DON'T LIKE MILK.
MY COW! MY COW!
REALLY, NO THANKS.
WELCOME! MY COUNTRY!
We're attracting a small crowd. Not unusual. Everyone thinks I'm Japanese.
JAPANESE?
NO. NOT JAPANESE.
The milkman grabs someone from our audience. A young guy, maybe 16.
HE IS SHOT FIVE TIMES!
FIVE TIMES?
29
J. SACCO 10-92

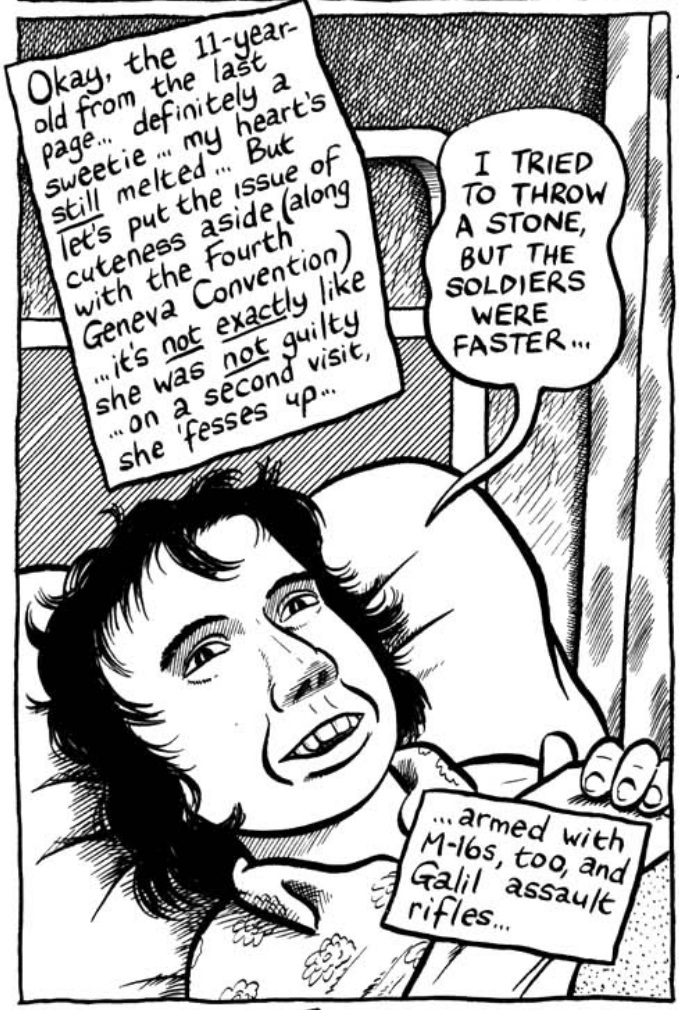
Under his hairline, a neat scar, for instance. A plastic bullet...
Someone else, his sleeve rolls up. See that? Live ammo...
Wounds!!
YOU WANT TO SEE MORE?
Of course!
Gunshot injuries!
Broken bones!
Amputees!
The intifada I know from appendices in small press books!
With names, places, dates of incident!
The intifada you can count!
So where are we going?
Hospital!
30

The kid who's caught five rounds links me arm-in-arm, practically carries me along!
No formalities!
Up stairs!
Past doctors and nurses!
Into a ward!
Family members part way!
An important Japanese dignitary has arrived!
A member of my entourage walks to the first bed, lifts a blanket...
Leg wound!
Cast!
See!
Oops!
We've woken him up!
Next bed!
This guy's already awake!
And chipper!
He wraps on a keffiyeh!
For Palestine!
And I take his picture!
31
J. SACCO 10-92

Now Bed Number One's fully awake!
He'll oblige me for a photo, too!
Bed Number Two passes him the keffiyeh!
Say cheese!
I'm warming up to my photo op!
I'm prowling around!
Looking for angles!
Who's Bed Number Three?
Hoo boy!
He don't look so good...
He's covered all the way up to his neck...
Dry blood on his pillow case...
We get the lowdown from his mother...
Small intestine and liver shot up.
ASK HER IF I CAN TAKE HIS PICTURE.
Mom asks her son.
LA!
'No' in Arabic.
Okay okay.
Io capisco
Say no more.
A private wound.
YOU WANT TO SEE CHILDREN?
32
J. SACCO 10-92

Arm-in-arm again, I'm towed down the corridor...
We push through a door...
...plow through well-wishers.
What's the casualty situation here?
The boy came in this morning...
Sitting at home...
...a bullet came through the wall.
The girl was shot in the schoolyard...
...multiple fractures...
In the same incident another child died, another was injured...
Photo?
Someone drapes a keffiyeh on her head...
...pulls back the blanket to show her ankle-to-pelvis cast.
She laughs at the flash.
Now she's chattering...
WHAT DOES SHE SAY?
SHE WANTS YOU TO TAKE ANOTHER PICTURE.

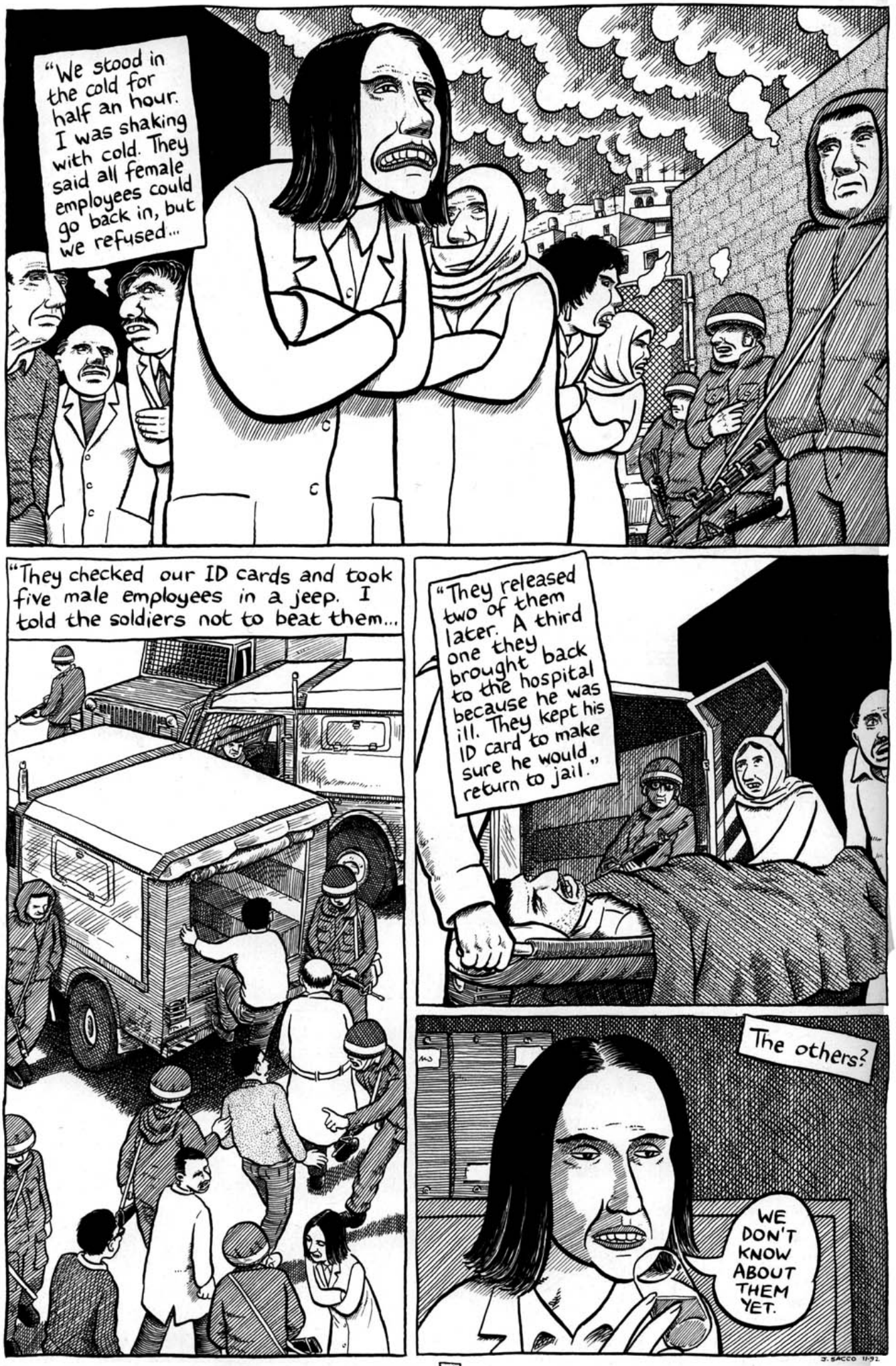
CARRY ON, DOCTOR

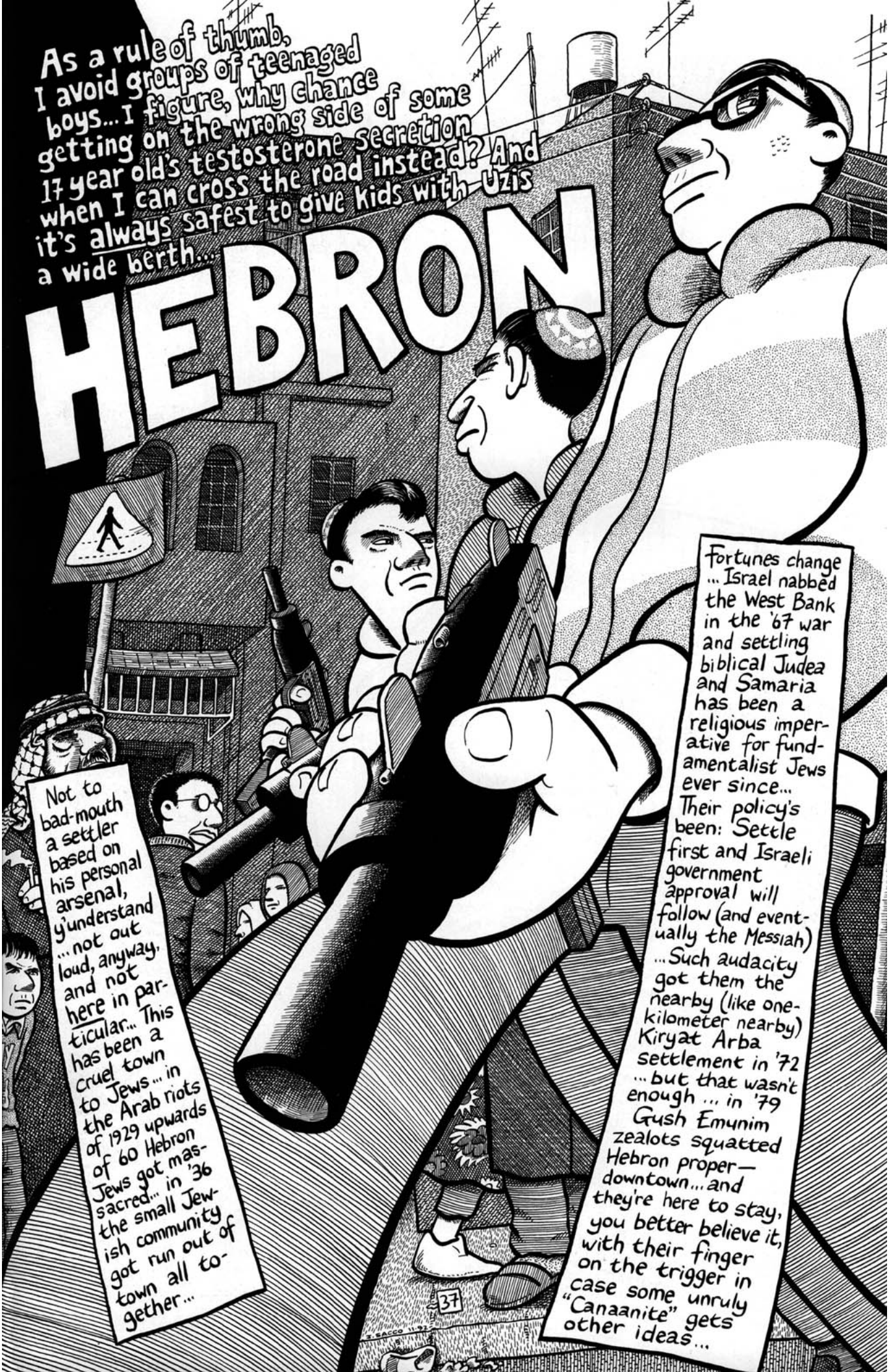


But there's fewer clashes these days and less of the acute-response-to-impact stuff that grabbed world attention from late '87 to '88, the first year of the intifada, when 400 Palestinians were killed, 20,000 injured, when Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered the crushing of protests with "force, might, and beatings" and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir called for putting "the fear of death into the Arabs of the areas..."

J. SACCO '92

And what's that scar on her neck? Oh, a bullet in the throat she picked up at Bir Zeit University while protesting a killing at Bethlehem University... three major surgeries...
Anyway, she says, after clashes soldiers often follow ambulances in, they enter the emergency room to interrogate the wounded...
Soldiers do what they want, she says, they come into the operating theater without masks, they question visitors, they've shouted at people donating blood, they've beaten her director. Other staffers tell me of soldiers obstructing ambulances, of taking patients "right from the [operating] theater...."
IT'S AN ORDINARY CASE TO WORK UNDER TENSION.
The last incident? "Two weeks ago soldiers came in and did a quick search, not a very serious one, they checked the W.C.
"They ordered all employees into the courtyard, except those in the operating room ... All the other patients we left unattended ...No one was allowed in or out...
J. SACCO 11-92


"We stood in the cold for half an hour. I was shaking with cold. They said all female employees could go back in, but we refused...
"They checked our ID cards and took five male employees in a jeep. I told the soldiers not to beat them...
"They released two of them later. A third one they brought back to the hospital because he was ill. They kept his ID card to make sure he would return to jail."
The others?
WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT THEM YET.
J. SACCO 11-92


As a rule of thumb, I avoid groups of teenaged boys... I figure, why chance getting on the wrong side of some 17 year old's testosterone secretion when I can cross the road instead? And it's always safest to give kids with Uzis a wide berth...
HEBRON
Not to bad-mouth a settler based on his personal arsenal, y'understand ...not out loud, anyway, and not here in particular... This has been a cruel town to Jews... in the Arab riots of 1929 upwards of 60 Hebron Jews got massacred... in '36 the small Jewish community got run out of town all together...
Fortunes change ... Israel nabbed the West Bank in the '67 war and settling biblical Judea and Samaria has been a religious imperative for fundamentalist Jews ever since... Their policy's been: Settle first and Israeli government approval will follow (and eventually the Messiah) ...Such audacity got them the nearby (like one-kilometer nearby) Kiryat Arba settlement in '72 ...but that wasn't enough ... in '79 Gush Emunim zealots squatted Hebron proper— downtown... and they're here to stay, you better believe it, with their finger on the trigger in case some unruly "Canaanite" gets other ideas...
37
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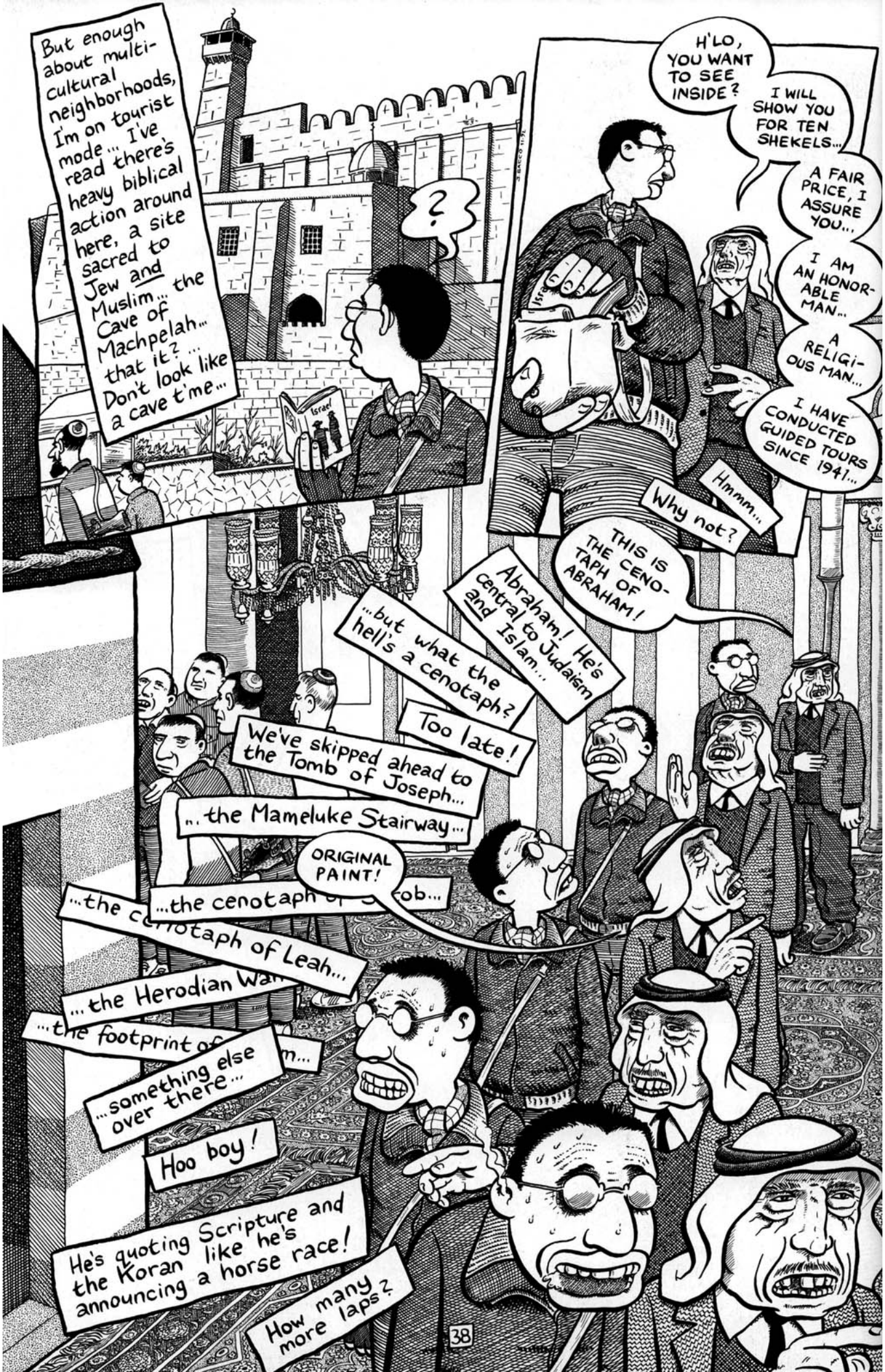
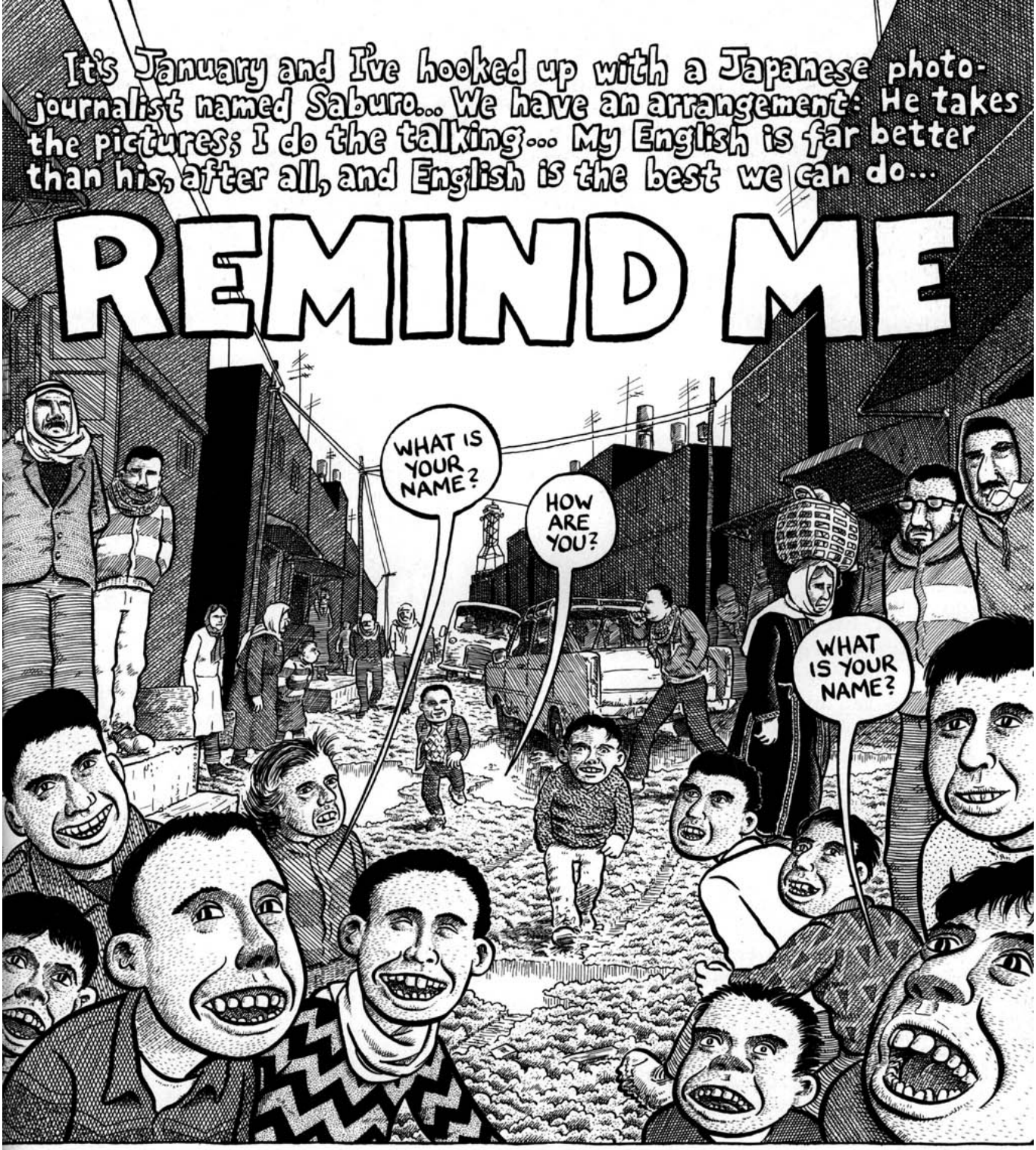

But enough about multi-cultural neighborhoods, I'm on tourist mode... I've read there's heavy biblical action around here, a site sacred to Jew and Muslim... the Cave of Machpelah... that it? ... Don't look like a cave t'me...
?
H'LO, YOU WANT TO SEE INSIDE?
I WILL SHOW YOU FOR TEN SHEKELS...
A FAIR PRICE, I ASSURE YOU...
I AM AN HONOR-ABLE MAN...
A RELIGI-OUS MAN...
I HAVE CONDUCTED GUIDED TOURS SINCE 1941...
Hmmm...
Why not?
THIS IS THE CENO-TAPH OF ABRAHAM!
Abraham! He's central to Judaism and Islam...
...but what the hell's a cenotaph?
Too late!
We've skipped ahead to the Tomb of Joseph...
...the Mameluke Stairway...
ORIGINAL PAINT!
...the cenotaph
...the cenotaph of Leah...
...the Herodian
...the footprint
...something else over there...
Hoo boy!
He's quoting Scripture and the Koran like he's announcing a horse race!
How many more laps?
38

Suddenly, five or six settlers are jeering at him...
They're mimicking him...
They approach, spitting out the name Mohammed...
He lashes back in Hebrew!
It's loud!
They're all barking at once...
...within arm's length of the cenotaph (whatever that is) of Isaac!
An Israeli guard comes up...
...takes a settler aside...
...probably tells him to cool it...
But one of them keeps at it...
He hasn't had his fun yet...
LISTEN, HE'S TALKING TO ME, NOT YOU!
HE'S MY GUIDE!
They move off... they're having a giggle with the guard and now they're praying...
I'm shaky, but the old man doesn't miss a beat ...there's more cenotaphs on the roster... he's spewing out facts like, never mind, rewind and play it back later if you miss something ...Everything's back to normal...
39

WHAT WERE THEY SAYING IN THERE?
THEY WERE SAYING THAT MOHAMMED IS NO PROPHET...
THAT MOHAMMED IS A SHOE...
I TOLD THE SOLDIER WHAT THEY WERE SAYING.
THE SITUATION IS BAD. EVERY DAY THERE IS A PROBLEM, YOU SAW. EVERY DAY HAS BEEN LIKE THIS FOR 24 YEARS.
DO YOU THINK JEWS AND ARABS CAN EVER LIVE TOGETHER?
WE CAN LIVE WITH THE EASTERN JEWS, THE ONES FROM IRAN, FROM NORTH AFRICA... BUT THE JEWS FROM EUROPE? THEY ARE DIFFERENT... THEY ARE ALWAYS LOOKING TO BE ON TOP, TO CONTROL, TO TAKE...
WHERE IS THE SOVIET UNION NOW?
IT IS GONE.
WE ALL GO.
YOU ARE A PERSON, I AM A PERSON, WE ARE ALL PERSONS, WE ALL COME FROM THE DUST...
THE ROMANS, THE BYZANTINES, THE CRUSADERS, THE TURKS, THE ENGLISH, THEY HAVE ALL BEEN HERE...
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
THEY ARE GONE.
IT TAKES GOD JUST THIS MUCH TO CHANGE THINGS.
ONLY GOD IS GREAT.



Not that English always gets you far, but the kids like the practice, and it's a good idea to get the kids on your side. I smile a lot, tell them my name is Joe, that I am fine, and that usually does the trick, though not always. Two or three times, in other places, kids have chased me off, calling out to each other that I'm a Jew, or picked up stones and fingered them till I've smiled and beamed my way into their little hearts. Kids can be exhausting...

Adults, too. Not that they run after you, giggling and tugging at your sleeve. In a place like this they hang back, staring, sizing up the kind of trouble you might mean. More smiles and greetings in order here. "Salaam Aleekum!" Keep that smile going. "Salaam Aleekum!" Now they're smiling back. Someone hands us a bag of tangerines.

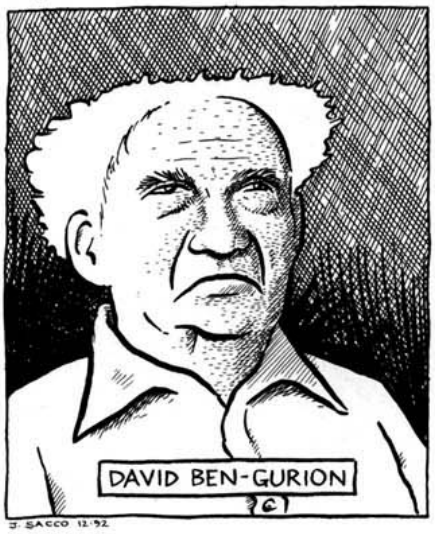
This is Balata, the biggest refugee camp in the West Bank, practically across the road from Nablus. Some Palestinians living here were among the three-quarters of a million who fled or were forced out of what is now Israel in 1948...

Do we need to talk about 1948? It's hardly a secret how the Zionists used rumors, threats, and massacres to expel the Arabs and create new demographics that guaranteed the Jewish nature

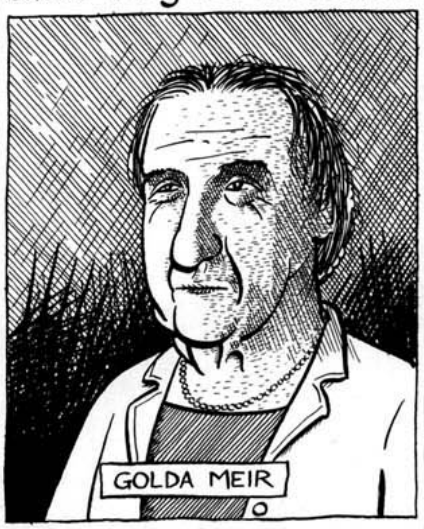
of Israel.

Of course, it's more comfortable to think of refugees as some regrettable consequence of war, but getting rid of the Palestinians has been an idea kicking around since Theodor Herzl formulated modern Zionism in the late 1800s. "We shall have to spirit the penniless population [sic] across the border," he wrote, "by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our own country."

After all, some Zionists reasoned, Palestinians were less attached to their ancestral homeland than the Jews who hadn't lived there for centuries. According to Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, a Palestinian "is equally at ease whether in Jordan, Lebanon or a variety of places." With war imminent, Ben-Gurion had no illusions about "spiriting" or inducing the Palestinians away. "In each attack," he wrote, "a decisive blow should be struck, resulting in the destruction of homes and the expulsion of the population." When that was basically accomplished he told an advisor, "Palestinian Arabs have only one role left — to flee."



But if 1948 is no secret, it's all but a non-issue, dismissed entirely by Prime Minister Golda Meir: "It was not as though there was a Palestinian people considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist."



But they did exist, and they do, and here they are... and their children, and their children's children... and still they are refugees... stale ones, maybe, in the nightly news scheme of things, but, nonetheless, refugees... which I suppose means they're waiting to go back...

But back to what? Close to 400 Palestinian villages were razed by the Israelis during and after the '48 war... fleeing Palestinians were declared "absentees" ...their homes and lands declared "abandoned" or "uncultivated" and expropriated for settlement by Jews.

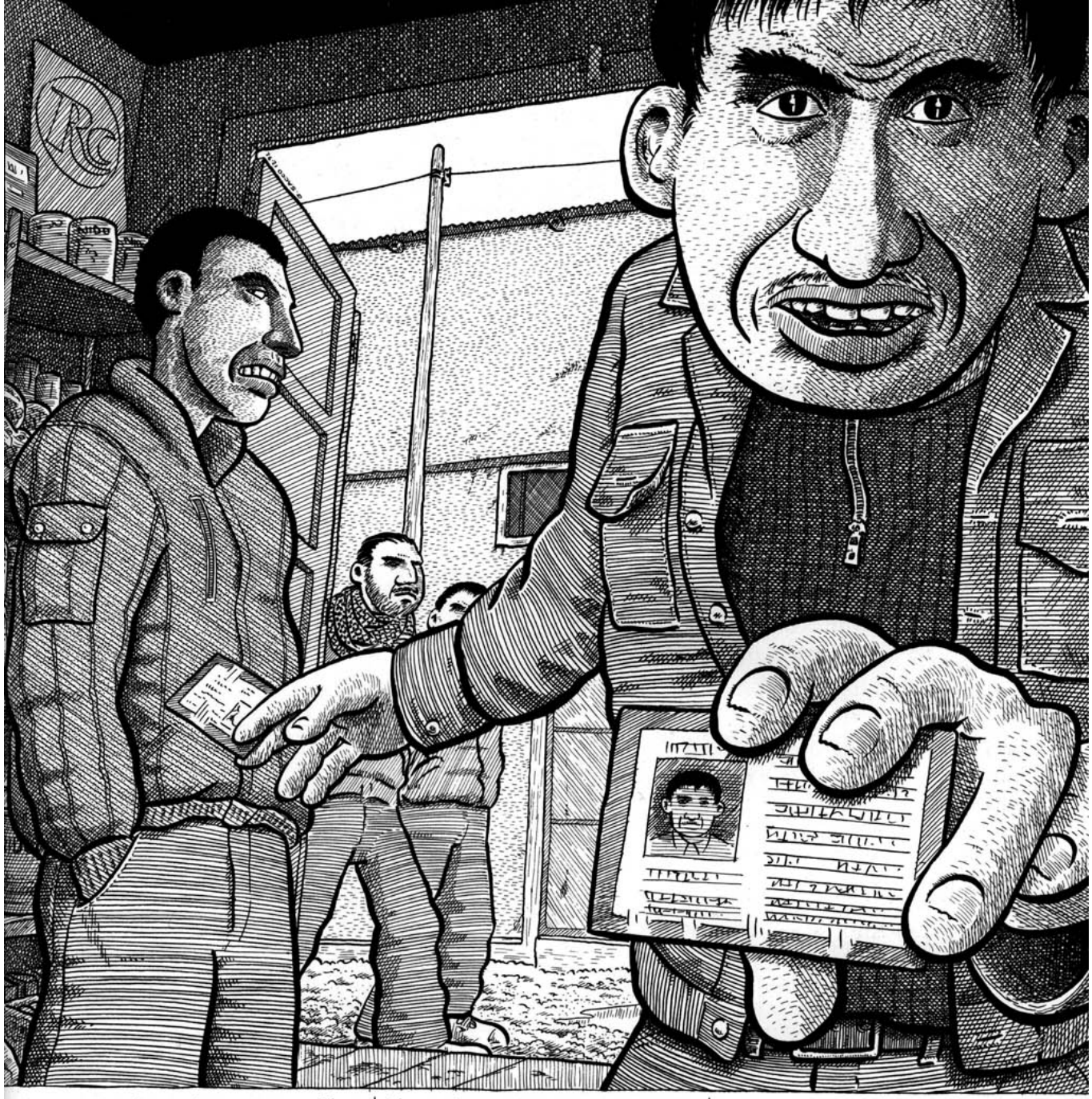
You say refugee camp and I picture tents, people lying on cots... but somewhere along the line Balata's residents figured they'd be here for the long haul, and the camp took on a sort of shabby permanence... People live here, they watch T.V., they shop, they raise families... On first glance, sloshing down a main road, what sets Balata apart is the mud. The snows have melted and the road is mud. Everywhere, mud.

We came here to meet Saburo's friend, but he's gone to a wedding somewhere and won't be back today. Now what? I'm freezing, and I wonder how long we're going to walk around in the cold.

Fortunately someone remembers Saburo from last time he was here and invites us into his shop for tea... ah, tea... holding a cup of tea, that's the ticket for right now... I'm lost in my tea while Saburo arranges a place to spend the night.

Meanwhile, word must be out 'cause small groups of the shebab are coming and going, giving us the once over. Most of them hang out for a few minutes and leave. Foreigners? Journalists? Big deal! We're not the first and won't be the last to drop by looking under their skirts for stories...

One of them, though, maybe he's 16 or 18, takes a shining to me. It must be all my smiling. His English is piss-poor, but that doesn't stop a guy like this, pantomime's not beneath him. He makes it clear he's done some rough-and-tumble with the IDF, the Israeli Defense Forces. He takes out his ID card to prove it. Every Palestinian over 16 in the Occupied Territories has to carry one, and his is green, which means he's done a



recent stint in prison. He orders over a friend who sheepishly produces an orange ID, the regular card color for West Bank residents.

"Green card: Intifada!" says my new pal, waving his card... "Orange card: No intifada," he says, holding up his friend's...

Orange Card retreats with a red face while Green Card beams proudly. I beam back, out of sympathy, really, 'cause I've got a bad feeling about a dude without discretion like this... He's destined for a casualty appendix, I'm thinking; he's probably got an appointment with a serious bullet.

Saburo's made arrangements for the night. We'll be staying with someone named Jabril, who speaks pretty good English. Jabril takes us home, sits us down in the front room, makes us comfy. There's full mobilization in the kitchen and he and his brothers bring out one plate after another. It's a regular feast! I tell you, I eat like a king in refugee camps, they pull out all the stops, I blow kisses in the direction of the invisible womenfolk. And now we're stuffed, and Jabril sets up the kerosene heater against our toes, he wants us crispy.

"Coffee?" he asks.

Christ, they love us in Palestine!

Meanwhile, the room's filling with neighbors. They've heard about us and they don't mind answering some questions. I reach for my pad. They've been laughing

and talking amongst themselves, but now they're quiet, even the children they've brought along.

I ask where they work. "Israel! Israel!" say most. There's jobs in Israel, they say, not in the West Bank. They get up early for their jobs. It's an hour there, an hour back, and they have to be out of the country by 6 p.m. Only Jabril has a local job, in Nablus. The others are part of Israel's convenient low-wage labor pool. Israel calls the economic shots and makes rules to suit itself, as when Defense Minister Rabin said in 1985: "No permits will be given for expanding agriculture or industry [in the Territories] which may compete with the State of Israel."

Mahmoud says he hasn't worked for two years. He has a green ID card, which means he can't cross into Israel for work. Green card? He was in prison? The soldiers came to his door one day, he says, he asked why and they smashed him in the head! In front of his wife and children! The soldiers wanted to know who was throwing stones. Mahmoud told them it wasn't him, but they took him anyway. He shrugs. "If they don't take me, they'll take you."

Now they're all blurting stories about soldiers and prisons. Firas says soldiers shot him two years ago and his leg's still not right. Ahmed says soldiers raided his home at midnight, they busted down the door, they came through the roof, they destroyed furniture, they caught him. He was 16. Three years in prison. "For what?" I ask. "For throwing a Molotov cocktail," he says. "And I didn't even see where it landed." The whole crowd busts up. They think that's pretty funny.

But the Israelis take Molotovs seriously, often demolishing the homes of Molotov throwers. I ask about demolished homes in Balata. They talk it over, pointing different directions, counting on their fingers, naming names.

"Six houses destroyed by dynamite," Abu Akram announces finally. "One of them belonged to my friend, a butcher, he was a rich man. Eleven other people lived in his house. They had one hour to move." The butcher, it seems, was a collaborator who was discovered and allowed to redeem himself by killing two other collaborators, who were considered dangerous. He killed them; the Israelis put him in prison for life, blew up his home. They say five collaborators have been killed in Balata.

I ask about life in the camp. "No cinema, no garden," says Jabril. "If the soldier sees me he asks, 'Where are you going?' If I want to play football in the schoolyard, the soldier comes. So my friends visit my home. We drink tea. We drink coffee. We speak. This is my life."

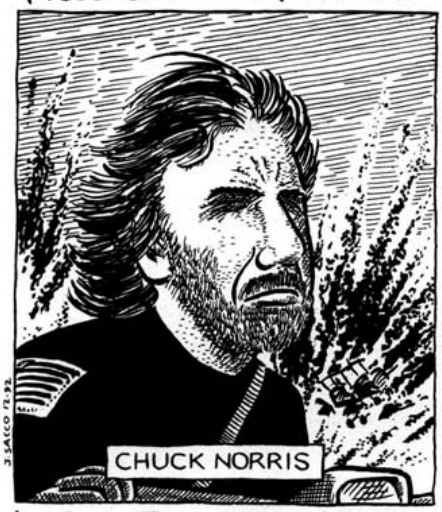
Jabril says Balata has a reputation with the soldiers. The first West Bank clashes of the intifada occurred here. Jabril says he's been knocked down in Nablus by soldiers who've discovered he's from Balata.

"When I go to Nablus," says Abu Akram, "I go with a hurry and come back. If a soldier stops me, he puts me up against a wall, takes my card, he asks the computer, he asks why I was in prison. If the soldier is very bad, he takes me in a store and beats me. It is best to stay in Balata camp."

We go on the roof. It's freezing up there, but the lights from a nearby

Jewish settlement are pretty. It's almost 8 o'clock and the party splits up. No one wants to be caught by soldiers after curfew.

Jabril is exhausted from translating, but the night is still young and he feels an obligation, I suppose, to entertain us. He sets up a video player and we watch 'The Delta Force,' starring Chuck Norris and Lee Marvin. The film is sort of based on a hijacking in the mid-'80s where a U.S. soldier was murdered and several Americans held hostage in Beirut. Eventually the hostages were released. In the movie, however, the Delta Force gets to rescue the hostages à la Entebbe and wipe out scores of Palestinian terrorists to boot. And while the Americans stand together and defiant against their tormentors, the snivelling Palestinians betray their cause en masse when presented with personal



harm. Jabril and his brothers mostly watch impassively, shaking their heads from time to time as Palestinians run screaming from battle or are blown to bits by Norris from his rocket-firing motorcycle.

After the video, they prepare mats for us on the floor. Jabril has the couch. He plays a cassette softly to fall asleep to. I recognize the voice— Oum Koulsoum, the Egyptian singer who died years ago. My friend Taha in Cairo told me her funeral was bigger than Sadat's. She wasn't much to look at, sort

of like Roy Orbison on a bad day, but what a voice! What a performance! It's obviously a love song... the audience is gasping, I'm gasping, too; I'm like the audience, overwhelmed. The song goes on and on. Jabril flips the cassette. The song is still going.

"What song is this?" I ask. "'Fakarouni,'" Jabril answers; "Remind Me."

Jabril is playing the song for his fiancée in Jordan. She's Palestinian, too, also a refugee... The Israelis won't let her visit because she has no immediate family members left in Palestine to apply for her visa... And Jabril can't go to her. The Israelis won't let him out of the country any more. They accused him of traveling on to Syria on his last visit to Jordan. They accused him of training for terrorist missions with George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. They accused him of training for terrorist missions in Japan. Japan?... They came for him at night and took him to Nablus prison and interrogated him for two months. They beat him, they kept him from sleeping, they— But we can talk about that some other time, he says. He has to get up early for work.

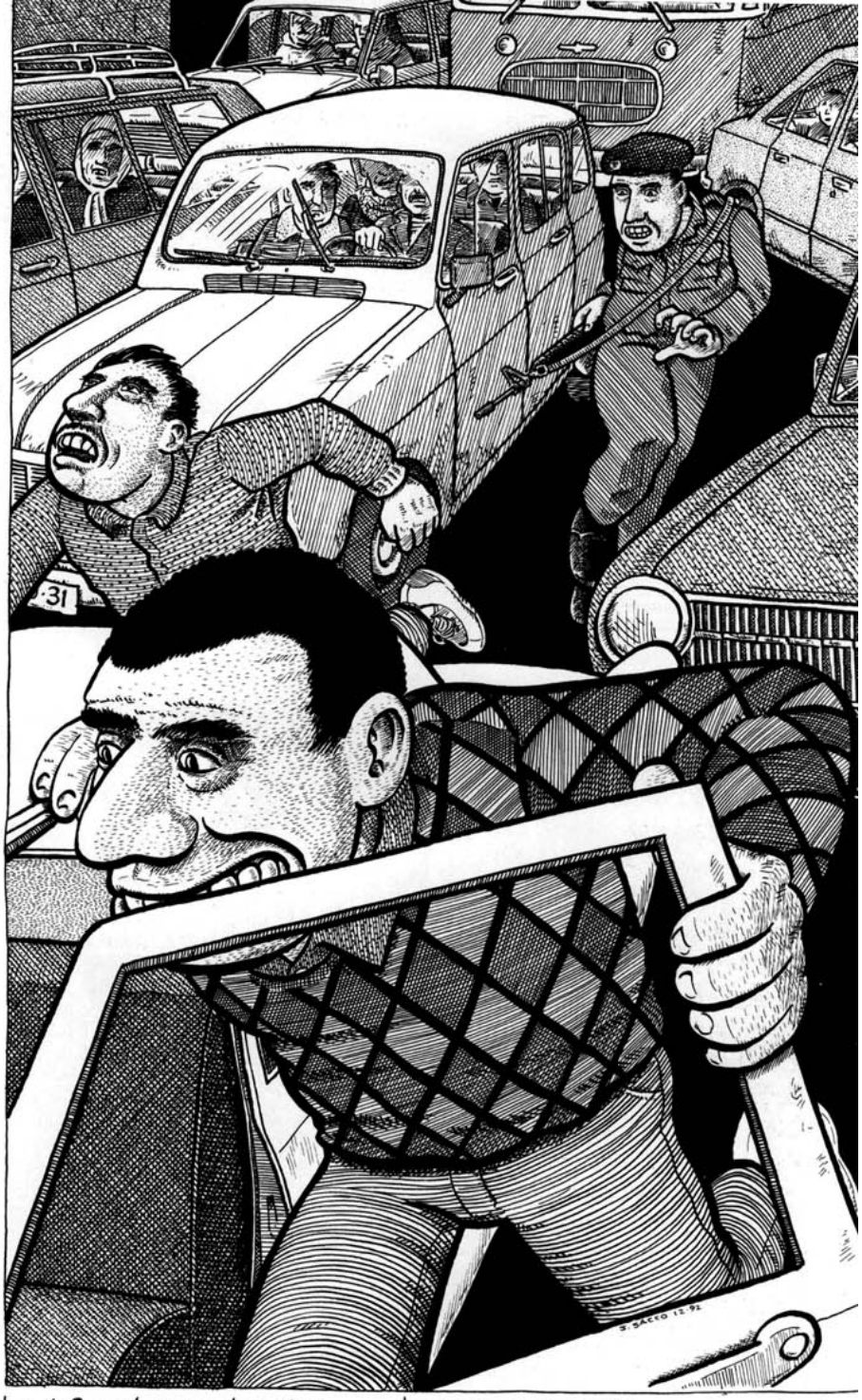
When Saburo and I wake up, Jabril is already gone... As usual, I'm shivering. The water's too cold to wash with.

This morning we want to check out one of Balata's preparatory schools administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency... UNRWA... which tends to some basic needs of Palestinian refugees. We walk to the school but they won't let us in, not without higher authorization. They put me on the phone with the UNRWA area office in Nablus. "You understand we need to take certain security precautions," explains the guy on the other end. "You've seen the situation there." He can give us authorization, if we come in to Nablus. We take the short taxi ride to town and the UNRWA official waves us into his office and dashes off a handwritten pass. We're all set, we're on the UNRWA guest list.

On the way to catch a taxi back to Balata, Saburo gets

a wild hair up his ass and decides he's going to get photos of Nablus prison. Nablus prison? With all its barbed wire and watch-towers and guards and "NO PHOTOGRAPHY" signs posted clearly? He gives me all the film he's taken in case soldiers pick him up. And off he goes.

I get to the taxi stand where I see Abu Akram from last night's discussion. He comes over, we shake hands, and then we both notice a soldier in a red beret making his way in our direction. Suddenly, Abu Akram's gone! He and some pals are running through the traffic, and Red Beret's running after them... the Palestinians hop aboard a taxi that's already in motion just as Red Beret is upon them... and Red Beret suddenly gives up his pursuit... maybe it wasn't a pursuit, maybe everyone was out for a run... I don't know... I'm already in a taxi clutching Saburo's film bag, feeling dizzy and like somehow I'm to blame.



Back in Balata, I'm sitting in the headmaster's office and he still won't let me into the school. Like an idiot, I've left my signed permission with an UNRWA dude at an office down the road. Three schoolboys have gone to retrieve it, but they haven't returned, and school's almost out. Come back tomorrow, says the headmaster. Be patient, says the teacher doing the translating. He says Israelis have come into the camp posing as journalists before... they've "interviewed" students and found out who the activists are... then the soldiers have come to make arrests...

Saburo shows up about the time the bell ends the school day. We step outside and are surrounded by kids asking our names and religions, which we answer several times... The teacher comes out of the office and shoos them away... He's joined by a colleague and they agree to show us around, permission or not.

They take us to a classroom. No electricity, no heat, they say, it's been like this for 40 years. "They thought the school was temporary when they built it," says one. "They thought they'd go back to their homes [in Israel] in a year or two." UNRWA is promising electricity, he says, but the students had to strike for it. They show us where the rain drips into the classroom. They

show us the outdoor toilets whose walls have crumbled.

The headmaster appears, he has angry words for the teachers. The three of them step aside, arguing, apparently, on the advisability of talking to "journalists." The teachers are raising their voices. The headmaster walks off sullenly. The teachers rejoin us. "Never mind," one of them says. "We told him we take full responsibility."

They tell us their curriculum corresponds to Jordan's. The Israelis allow English and math books in from Jordan, they say, but no history or geography text, for example, that mentions Palestine. Not that it matters, says one teacher. "Since the intifada it is not necessary to teach such children that this is not Israel."

They say soldiers pass by ... soldiers chase people through the school... they shoot ... it doesn't make for a good school environment for the 500 boys. What about for teachers? On a recent morning, says one of them, on his way to school, soldiers beat him. They ordered him to take down a picture of Arafat from a wall. Yes, but why did they beat him? "For speaking to them in English and not in Hebrew," he says.

Saburo and I make a quick visit to the local UNRWA clinic. They don't ask for authorization here. A nurse gives us a tour of the antenatal department— 50 camp births a month, she says; the laboratory; the rehabilitation unit; and (with some pride) the new X-ray room.

Now the doctor will see us. The nurse jumps us past the long line waiting at his door. The doctor greets us into his office and shoos out a couple of female patients.

Just two doctors serve the clinic, he says, one of them a relief doctor. "The main problem," he says, "is overload." The clinic gets up to 300 patients a day. (Last night, at the roundtable discussion, the men joked about the rushed diagnoses at the clinic. "Go to the window! Go to the window!" they sang, mimicking the staff sending them away with hurried prescriptions.)

The doctor says he sees a lot of respiratory illnesses from bad ventilation and overcrowding, "from problems related to political and social conditions."

Meanwhile, there's knocking on the door! We've been too long! The women who've been kicked out want back in! Whose clinic is it, anyway?

Outside we find Green Card —Mr. Intifada from yesterday— and a friend. They've

come to fetch us. For what? Their English isn't good enough to explain. We follow them. I've become familiar with Balata's main roads, but they lead us into the maze of side streets, into the back alleys, where there's hardly a couple of shoulder-widths between houses and little boys are playing marbles... We're twisting and turning... hopping over open drainage canals...going left, going right, going in circles, I can't tell. Periodically Green Card motions for us to stop, peers around a corner, motions for us to follow. "Police danger," he informs us. He stops us again. They frisk us. They go through our belongings. Green Card turns the pages of my passport, he studies leftover bank receipts from Cairo, my air ticket, my camera... He's flipping through my journals... He's serious, grim even... Of course, I could have reams of notes about a hot-tubbing experience with Ariel Sharon and Green Card wouldn't have a clue ... In any case, they decide we're kosher... more twists and turns... we're back on a muddy main street ... whew...

Now we're in a house, the tea is coming... Jabril is there, and a few faces from the night before... but there's someone new... you'd figure after all the precautions Green Card took we'd be meeting Arafat himself or at least a Black Panthers guerrilla, but this new fellow looks pretty ordinary... and his spiel isn't anything I haven't heard before... He's vague about who he is, though, and I don't press him for a resume.

He says the uprising is the result of years of suffering, that the intifada started spontaneously but is now directed by the PLO. He says the intifada focused world attention on the Palestinians and now there's a chance for a political solution...

That's the tip-off. This guy's with Fateh, Arafat's faction of the PLO... I've made a game of guessing what PLO faction a Palestinian supports by his opinion of the "peace process"... Popular Front supporters, for example, oppose the talks 'cause of stiff Israeli preconditions on the Palestinian negotiating team.

He says Balata is mainly

with Fateh. Fateh supports the negotiations, so he supports the negotiations ...but he's a skeptic. "The majority of Israelis don't want land-for-peace," he says. "They want to make agreements with other Arab nations, but not with Palestinians." What does he see ahead? "More settlements, more soldiers, more [Jewish] immigration." And if the negotiations fail, then what? "What do you expect?" he says. "The intifada will continue."

The discussion's over. The women are sending in food. We're dipping pita bread into all kinds of stuff. We're off politics now. We're laughing. Here comes the coffee...

They're asking Saburo about Japan, and I turn his rough English into English they can understand. It comes out that Saburo is something of a spiritualist, he reads lifelines... Green Card pulls his chair up and sticks out his palm. After a little analysis, Saburo has complimentary words about Green Card's emotions and intelligence... Then Saburo looks hard at the palm and announces that something will happen to Green Card soon. "Back in jail," says Jabril and they all laugh. "No," insists Saburo, "things will get better."

They warn us about the upcoming strikes... Hamas, the Islamic fundamentalist group, has called a general strike for tomorrow; the Unified National Leadership has called one for the day after; and both groups have called for a strike the day after that ... That's going to mess up the taxi situation. We decide to split rather than get stranded in Balata.

We take a taxi to Nablus ...the Nablus streets are all but empty; maybe there's a curfew coming up ...At the taxi stand we find a Jerusalem-bound stretch Mercedes and wait inside with a couple and their boy. The driver won't leave till he gets one or two more passengers, but we'll have to leave soon if we want to get through Ramallah before Ramallah's five o'clock curfew...

A jeep pulls up across the street. Soldiers jump out and head into a narrow Old City passageway. There's a gunshot... Another jeep pulls up. More soldiers. A soldier with a radio drops his phone and it swings wildly out of reach below his knees. He can't seem to get at it. He's having trouble. The boy in the taxi is laughing, calling the soldier "mignoon" — crazy. His father says to roll up the windows in case there's gas... Another jeep shows up. More soldiers are piling out and ducking into the passageway.

And finally we're leaving Nablus... past the prison ...We're leaving Balata behind ...Balata is receding... I'm looking forward to the long, winding hilly stretch ahead... Jerusalem is one hour away... Jerusalem is one hour away... meanwhile, I'll enjoy the scenery.

Chapter Three

A THOUSAND WORDS
We've been snooping the Occupation, Saburo and I, but not today... today we're not looking for trouble... today we're just cruising East Jerusalem, that's all... now we're crossing Nablus Road... like schoolkids off the bus, to get to the other side... I repeat: Today we're not looking for trouble...
But here it comes anyway!
Fast and lots of it!
Palestinian women and children!
They're singing...
...chanting...
...and marching right at us down the middle of the road!
Hoo boy!
They're screaming at carloads of Israelis...
...pounding on hoods...
...jaywalking!
And traffic's backing up!
Drivers are red-faced...
...screaming back...
...pushing on car horns!
J. SACCO 1991

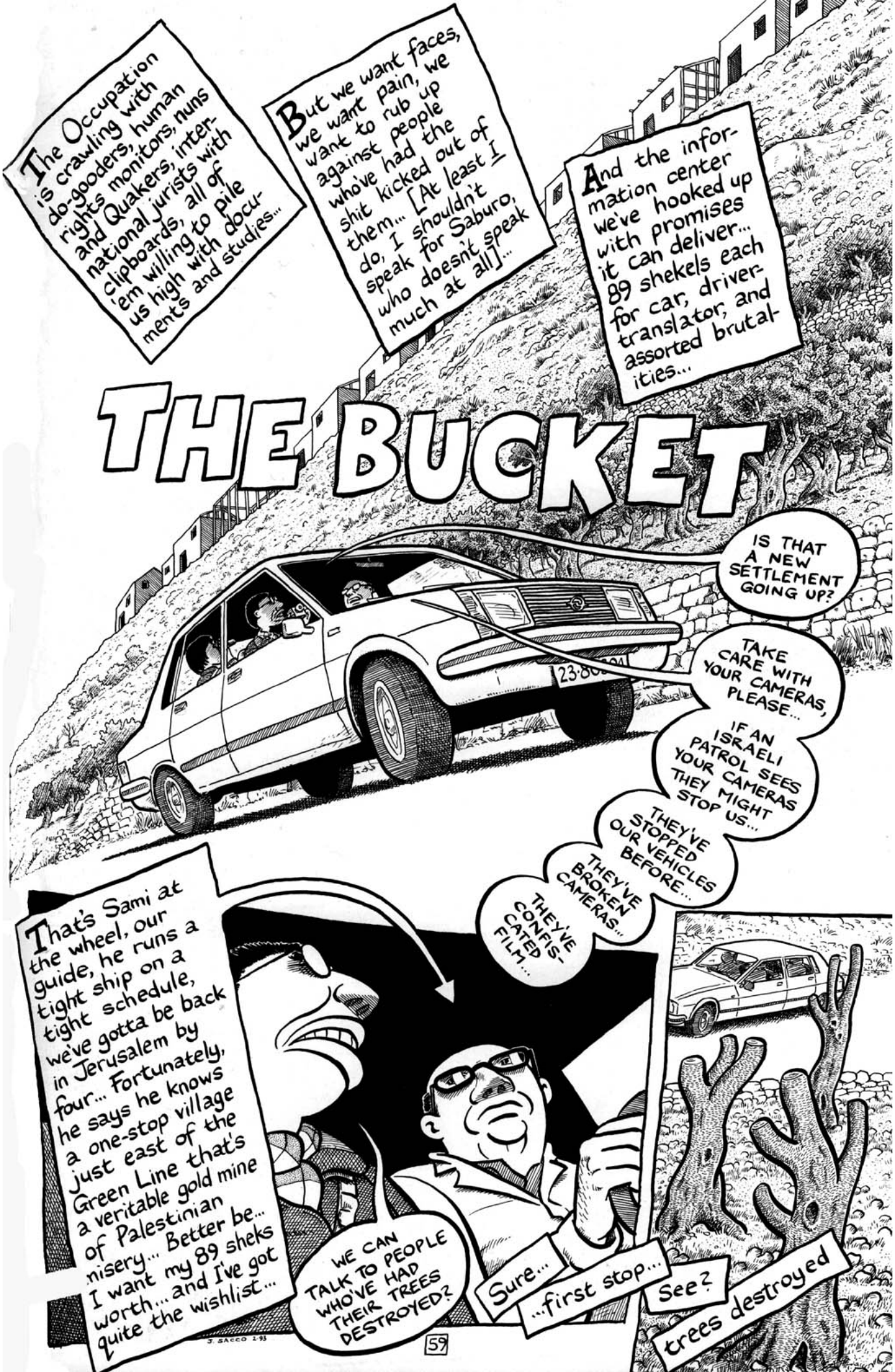
Saburo and I, we're professionals, we nod to each other and click into journalistic mode:
He's setting f-stops and screwing on lenses the size of Saturn V rockets;
I'm ferreting out a talker for the who/what/why of an inverted-pyramid lead paragraph...
IT STARTED AT THE RED CROSS OFFICE ... THEY'RE PROTESTING THE EXPULSION ORDERS.
Ah, yes, the outrage-of-the-month... 12 Palestinians — journalists, a teacher, an accountant, etc. — ordered deported by Defense Minister Moshe Arens... they're not formally charged with anything, mind you, but between you and me and the Israelis that makes 'em even more suspect — "terror chieftains," according to "The Jerusalem Post"... and besides, four Jewish settlers have been killed in the past three months and someone's gotta pay! Not that any of the 12 are implicated — not the librarian, nor the father of 14, nor the coordinator of the rehabilitation center for the handicapped, etc. — someone's gotta pay! The whip's gotta come down somewhere! And bollocks to the Fourth Geneva Convention and what it says about deportations! Hell, let's deport the fourth Geneva Convention while we're at it!
But meanwhile...
...more trouble...
...jeeps and vans...
...police in blue...
...border police in green...
...tear gas at the ready...
54

persuasion first...
MOVE IT!
...to get 'em into a side street
...then clubs
whack!
waiting
You okay?
more jeeps

shouting
tired of waiting
crying
chanting in English
PLO! ISRAEL NO!
which gets some policemen smiling
And that makes it all seem like a put on...
...like everyone's done this before...
...like everyone knows his or her part...
...like the truncheons are props and the bawling brat a nice touch...
But—
the old lady wakes me up
man, she's got pipes!
she's screaming, over and over:
"Dogs! Dogs!"
THAT'S IT, MY FRIEND... IT'S OVER.
56

Saburo and I hook up again... we compare notes... though tons of photographers were buzzing around the demo, Saburo, with his super-dupergosharootie 35mm SaturnV, got barked off the scene... I seem t'have had better luck...
I THINK I GOT A COUPLA GOOD SHOTS.
Then...
HEY, YOU REMEMBER ME?
AH, SALEH, RIGHT?
Sure, we shared a taxi from Ramallah once...he's Palestinian... a photographer for an international wire service...
I JUST GOT HERE...
YOU GET PICTURES? PEOPLE GETTING HIT?
I GOT THIS PICTURE OF POLICE DRAGGING A WOMAN, BUT IT'S A LOUSY CAMERA.
NEVER MIND. IF IT'S A GOOD PICTURE WE'LL BUY IT FROM YOU.
He calls his office and they want to see my pics...
On the way, he tells me he's bored with the uprising... there's no good pictures anymore... same old demonstrations, he says, same people throwing stones, same soldiers...
By the time we reach the office, I'm readying to accept trophies and tearfully thank my parents...
THE INTIFADA IS OVER, ESPECIALLY WHEN I DON'T GET THE PICTURE!
Yeah, but I did... and pretty soon my photo's gonna be wired 'round the world, splashed on front pages everywhere... "photo by 'Scoop' Sacco"! Photojournalism's overnite sensation! And know what? There was nothing to it! I'm a fucking natural!
QUOTE-UNQUOTE GESTURE
YOU THE GUY WITH THE PICTURES OF THE "VIOLENCE"?
That's me!
FALAFEL
HAMBURGER
MAXI GRILL
CAMEL
J.SACCO 2-93

While they develop my Pulitzer, I'm charging on the news-room hum... Ah, journalism, my first love! The green hue of the display terminals... the bent-back style guides... the relentless drip drip of coffee ...this is me, man... I belong here...
BLAH BLAH BLAH HANAN ASHRAWI BLAH BLAH BLAH FAISAL HUSSEINI BLAH BLAH BLAH WASHINGTON BLAH BLAH BLAH
YOU SEE THE PICTURE THE PAPERS PICKED UP FROM REUTERS?
MY PICTURE WAS AS GOOD AS THIS PICTURE.
REUTERS SCREWED US ON THIS PICTURE.
PHOTO OF AN ORTHODOX JEW PRAYING IN THE SNOW AT THE WESTERN WALL
YOU SEE MY PICTURES FROM YESTERDAY OF THE GREEK PATRIARCH AT BETHLEHEM?
YES. THEY WERE FINE.
YOU LIKED THEM?
THAT WAS YESTERDAY.
THERE'S A PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE FAMILIES OF THE PEOPLE GETTING DEPORTED.
YOU KNOW WHAT IT'LL BE. A BUNCH OF FAMILIES SITTING AROUND.
YOU THINK I SHOULD GO?
YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING ELSE TO DO?
Saleh leaves, and finally my negatives are ready...
THERE'S NOTHING HERE.
And that's that, not even a thanks...
Another photographer is more explanatory...
SEE, IF YOU'D BEEN STANDING WHERE THIS GUY IS STANDING, YOU WOULD HAVE GOT FACES.
THE IDEA WAS GOOD.
The idea?
58
J. BACCO 1991


The Occupation is crawling with do-gooders, human rights monitors, nuns and Quakers, international jurists with clipboards, all of 'em willing to pile us high with documents and studies...
But we want faces, we want pain, we want to rub up against people who've had the shit kicked out of them... [At least I do, I shouldn't speak for Saburo, who doesn't speak much at all]...
And the information center we've hooked up with promises it can deliver... 89 shekels each for car, driver-translator, and assorted brutalities...
THE BUCKET
IS THAT A NEW SETTLEMENT GOING UP?
TAKE CARE WITH YOUR CAMERAS, PLEASE...
IF AN ISRAELI PATROL SEES YOUR CAMERAS THEY MIGHT STOP US...
THEY'VE STOPPED OUR VEHICLES BEFORE...
THEY'VE BROKEN CAMERAS...
THEY'VE CONFISCATED FILM...
That's Sami at the wheel, our guide, he runs a tight ship on a tight schedule, we've gotta be back in Jerusalem by four... Fortunately, he says he knows a one-stop village just east of the Green Line that's a veritable gold mine of Palestinian misery... Better be... I want my 89 sheks worth... and I've got quite the wishlist...
WE CAN TALK TO PEOPLE WHO'VE HAD THEIR TREES DESTROYED?
Sure...
...first stop...
See?
trees destroyed
J. SACCO 2-93
59

The woman of the house lets us stomp around for photos, then invites us in... As usual, all the time is teatime, and there's chocolates left over from the Greek Orthodox Christmas...

TELL US ABOUT THE TREES.

WE WERE SITTING HERE IN THE EVENING TWO WEEKS AGO WHEN WE HEARD A SOUND LIKE A BOMB...

"Somebody was wounded beyond our neighbor's house — a Palestinian who'd been preparing a Molotov cocktail. He moved into the street and signalled for cars to stop...

"A settler stopped, and then a car driven by a Palestinian. The settler took the ID card of the Palestinian driver and told him to drive the wounded man to the settlement. The settler followed in his car...

"At 4 a.m. the soldiers drove by with loudspeakers and imposed an immediate curfew on the area...

J. SACCO 1993

"The following day, in the afternoon, the soldiers returned and cut down the olive trees of my neighbors, the trees along the street...

"The soldiers lifted the curfew...

"The next day they came back and cut my six olive trees...

WHY ARE YOU CRYING?

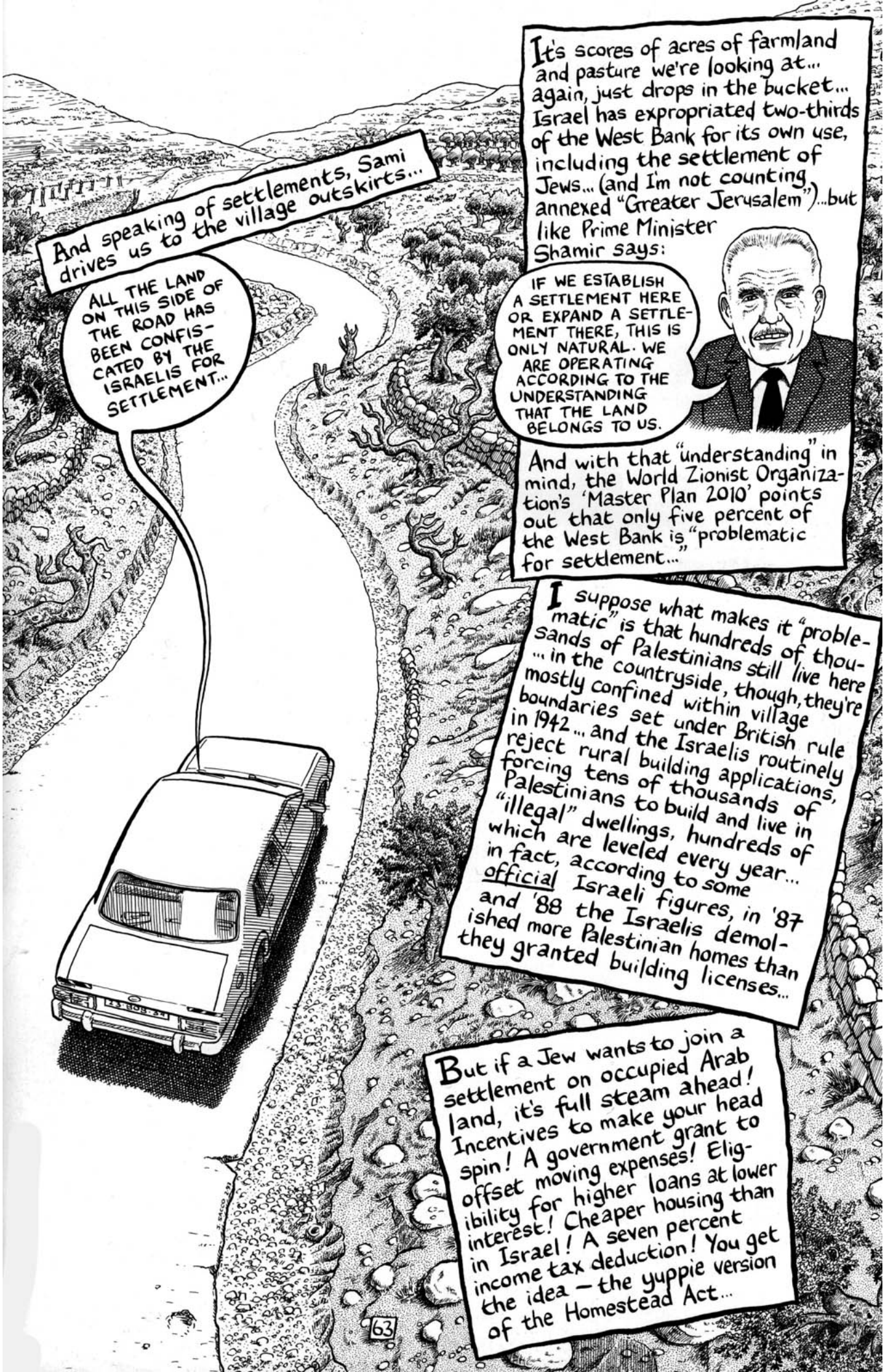
BECAUSE YOU ARE CUTTING MY TREES.

THAT'S NOTHING.

"All together they cut down 70 olive trees, the trees of 13 families."

WERE YOUR CHILDREN WITH YOU WHEN THE SOLDIERS CUT YOUR TREES?
THE YOUNGEST. I WOULDN'T LET MY OLDEST BOY OUT OF THE HOUSE.
WHY NOT?
BECAUSE A MONTH AGO HE WAS BEATEN BY SOLDIERS.
"It happened at nighttime. A settler came to the door with a pistol, saying my boy had thrown stones at his car...
"A jeep arrived. The soldiers exploded a sound bomb and came to the house...
"They asked if my boy had thrown stones, and they beat him here in the living room...
"Then they asked the settler and he said it wasn't my boy. Maybe because I was crying. Or he felt sorry or embarrassed."
Her father walks in and learns we've been talking about olive trees...
THE OLIVE TREE IS OUR MAIN SOURCE OF LIVING...
WE USE THE OIL FOR OUR FOOD AND WE BUY OUR CLOTHES WITH THE OIL WE SELL...
A GOOD ROMAN TREE CAN PRODUCE 20-30 LITERS IN A YEAR...
HERE WE HAVE NOTHING ELSE BUT THE TREES...
THE ISRAELIS DON'T GIVE PEOPLE FROM OUR VILLAGE PERMITS TO WORK IN ISRAEL...
61

THE ISRAELIS KNOW THAT AN OLIVE TREE IS THE SAME AS OUR SONS...
IT NEEDS MANY YEARS TO GROW, SIX OR SEVEN YEARS FOR A STRONG TREE...
TWO YEARS AGO THE ISRAELIS CUT DOWN 17 OF MY TREES...
MY FATHER PLANTED THOSE TREES...
SOME OF THEM WERE 100 YEARS OLD...
WHY DID THEY CUT YOUR TREES?
"A Molotov or stones were thrown from my field. The soldiers said I could either put a four-meter high wire fence around my field or they would bulldoze my trees...
"I didn't have money for the fence...
"In the end they obliged me to cut down the trees myself. The soldiers brought me a chainsaw and watched."
I have to ask... HOW DID IT FEEL?
I WAS CRYING...
I FELT I WAS KILLING MY SON WHEN I CUT THEM DOWN...
And his is just a teardrop in the bucket... Six Palestinian trees? 17? 70? Pfft! The Israelis uprooted 120,000 plus in the intifada's first four years... for "security reasons" like in these cases... or in constructing the network of roads that link Jewish settlements to Israel...
23-808-31
62


It's scores of acres of farmland and pasture we're looking at... again, just drops in the bucket... Israel has expropriated two-thirds of the West Bank for its own use, including the settlement of Jews... (and I'm not counting annexed "Greater Jerusalem")...but like Prime Minister Shamir says:
IF WE ESTABLISH A SETTLEMENT HERE OR EXPAND A SETTLEMENT THERE, THIS IS ONLY NATURAL. WE ARE OPERATING ACCORDING TO THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE LAND BELONGS TO US.
And with that "understanding" in mind, the World Zionist Organization's 'Master Plan 2010' points out that only five percent of the West Bank is "problematic for settlement..."
And speaking of settlements, Sami drives us to the village outskirts...
ALL THE LAND ON THIS SIDE OF THE ROAD HAS BEEN CONFISCATED BY THE ISRAELIS FOR SETTLEMENT...
I suppose what makes it "problematic" is that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians still live here ... in the countryside, though, they're mostly confined within village boundaries set under British rule in 1942 ... and the Israelis routinely reject rural building applications, forcing tens of thousands of Palestinians to build and live in "illegal" dwellings, hundreds of which are leveled every year... in fact, according to some official Israeli figures, in '87 and '88 the Israelis demolished more Palestinian homes than they granted building licenses...
But if a Jew wants to join a settlement on occupied Arab land, it's full steam ahead! Incentives to make your head spin! A government grant to offset moving expenses! Eligibility for higher loans at lower interest! Cheaper housing than in Israel! A seven percent income tax deduction! You get the idea — the yuppie version of the Homestead Act...
63

And while we're on the topic, Sami has a special treat for us...
YOU'RE IN LUCK... SETTLERS ATTACKED THE VILLAGE LAST NIGHT...
He takes us to a home off the main street... the glass in the front door and windows is smashed in...
On the inside, shards everywhere, an axe, dried blood...
We'll get the story, but first things first — a cup of tea...
FIRST I HEARD A SMASHING SOUND FROM MY NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE...
...AND IMMEDIATELY A SMASHING HERE...
IT MUST HAVE BEEN TWO TEAMS SIMULTANEOUSLY...
BUT WE DIDN'T SEE ANYONE...
WE JUST HEARD THE SOUND OF A CAR STARTING UP...
"I was frightened and stayed in the back room with my son and daughter...
"My son wanted to open the door but I forbid him. We stayed there all night till 5a.m. without sleep...
"In the morning we found the axe lying there with the blood. The attacker must have cut himself on the glass and dropped the axe...
"We learned that nearly 20 homes were attacked last night."
J. SACCO 2-93

A neighbor who's been listening invites us to his home, which he says was attacked three nights ago...
WE'VE HAD A LONG STORY WITH THE SETTLERS. THE SOLDIERS SAY WE THROW STONES AT THE SETTLERS' CARS. THESE INCIDENTS ARE A REACTION TO THE SETTLERS' BEHAVIOR...
At his home, the front windows are shattered...
Inside, glass and dozens of large stones, left there like the axe, I suppose to prove to visitors—and maybe themselves—that such things happen...
IT WAS ON THE EVE OF OUR GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTMAS... 10 P.M. ...I WAS SITTING HERE WATCHING T.V....
"A group of cars drove down the main street honking horns. The first car stopped and two settlers got out with guns and fired four times in the air...
GET OUT OF YOUR HOUSES, DOGS!
"...and they yelled bad words about prostitutes—sex words—in Arabic and Hebrew...
"There were nearly 20 cars and maybe 40 settlers, both sexes. I heard a child calling for his father in Hebrew...

"They started smashing the windows of the home across the street...
"Another group came at this house. I turned the lights and T.V. off, and I drew the curtains. As I was locking the inner door, the first stones came through the window...
"The attack lasted 15 minutes and in the morning we found 60 stones...
"My parents were in their bedroom during the attack. My mother was nearly unconscious from being scared. When I started talking to her she had no ability to reply."
IT'S NOT JUST THE MONEY FOR THE WINDOWS ...WHAT ABOUT MY MOTHER? PSYCHOLOGICALLY?
Meanwhile, his mother, who can't follow our English, is fixing lunch... And I tell ya, I need something in my stomach pronto...all this tea, or maybe it's the sugar, has got me jittery...
But she's taking her sweet time... she's turning over the bread and rearranging the coals with her fingers... Christ, she's gotta have some kinda calluses to handle that heat...
66

And... ...finally... ...the manna's on the table...
IN THE MORNING MY FATHER WENT TO THE SETTLEMENT TO MAKE A COMPLAINT, AND—
THE SETTLERS ARE THE ONES WHO ATTACKED US, AND WE HAVE TO GO TO THE SETTLEMENT TO REPORT IT!
THEY USED TO GO TO RAMALLAH MILITARY HEADQUARTERS FOR SUCH A THING, BUT NOW THEY MUST GO TO THE HALAMISH SETTLEMENT... THE SETTLEMENTS NOW HAVE THIS POLITICAL FUNCTION... THAT'S WHERE ID CARDS, LICENSES, AND ALL PERMITS ARE ISSUED...
ANYWAY, THEY SENT A SOLDIER OUT TO TALK TO US...
"I asked him how we're supposed to protect ourselves from such attacks."
WE HAVEN'T GOT THE POWER TO PROTECT SETTLERS OR PALESTINIANS...
LOOK, ON YOUR SIDE THERE ARE SOME EXTREMISTS, AND ON OUR SIDE THERE ARE SOME EXTREMISTS.
WELL, WE HOPE TO HEAR ABOUT THE CHARGING OF YOUR EXTREMISTS LIKE WE HEAR ABOUT THE CHARGING OF OURS.
I THINK THIS CASE WILL NOT BE ACTIVE... I EXPECT NO RESULTS.
J. SACCO 3.93

Before we can digest lunch or anything else, Sami drives us to the next bummer...
...a demolished home.
An old lady invites us in to an adjacent, one-room building...
The kettle's on... more tea!
I HAVE ONE SON IN AMERICA, ONE IN IRAQ—WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM IN A LONG TIME... MY 26-YEAR-OLD SON IS IN ANSAR III PRISON SERVING A FIVE-YEAR SENTENCE FOR THROWING A MOLOTOV COCKTAIL. HIS WIFE, WHO HAS NO ISRAELI ID, WAS REFUSED REENTRY WHEN SHE TRIED TO GET BACK FROM JORDAN. SHE'S BEEN THERE TWO YEARS...
WE USED TO LIVE IN THE HOUSE: ME, MY SON, AND HIS WIFE.
J. SACCO 1993
"One month after he was arrested, the soldiers came and surrounded the house. They told us to leave...
"A bulldozer arrived...
YOU HAVE ARRESTED MY SON! HIS FATHER DIED 20 YEARS AGO!
"We tried immediately to take out the furniture. Many neighbors came to help us. We had one hour, and many things were left inside...
"They told me to get into this room and lock the door, and they demolished our house..."
68

And we're back to our tired metaphor —the bucket... Her house is just one of almost 1,250 Palestinian homes demolished by the Israelis during the intifada's first four years... in this case, it was a collective punishment, where the security forces weren't even obliged to prove her son's guilt... but like I mentioned earlier, it can happen for lack of a building permit, too...
I LIVE ALONE IN THIS ROOM NOW.
THEY JAILED HIM, THEY WON'T LET HIS WIFE BACK, AND WE HAVE GOD TO HELP US.
DO YOU VISIT YOUR SON?
"For the first two years, visits were forbidden... Now I go once every three months... I have to go to the settlement to apply for a visit... The Red Cross takes us in buses to the prison... It's in the Negev...
"It takes three hours to get there, and we are allowed a 15-minute visit...
"We are separated by two fences, and we have to shout to be heard over the others..."
HOW IS HE?
HE SEEMS LIKE A MAN TO ME. HE'S LEARNED A LOT THERE. HE SAYS, "DON'T WORRY, I'M GOOD HERE."
I HOPE I WILL STILL BE ALIVE WHEN HE IS RELEASED.
ONE MORE STOP: THE FAMILY OF A YOUTH SHOT DEAD BY SETTLERS.
Okay, but I'm just about at my limit...
One more drop and...
69
J. SACCO 3-93

But the tea comes anyway, while the father of a dead son sits silently against the wall...
IT WAS 9 P.M.
WE WERE IN THE HOUSE. WE HEARD A BULL-DOZER...
SOME SETTLERS HAD COME TO DEMOLISH WATER PIPES IN THE VILLAGE...
THERE WAS A CONFRON-TATION...
MY BROTHER WENT OUT THE BACK DOOR ON THIS SMALL ROOF WITH OUR COUSIN TO SEE WHAT WAS GOING ON...
NOT TO JOIN IN...
A SETTLER SHOT THEM FROM THE ROAD DOWN THERE.
"Our cousin died immediately. My brother was shot in the abdomen, and he made it back into the house...
"The soldiers put a curfew on the village, and we couldn't leave the house to take him to hospital...
"He was with his mother and father. He bled to death in three hours."
HE WAS 21.
MY COUSIN WAS 17.
WHAT ABOUT THE SETTLER WHO DID IT?
HE WAS RELEASED ON THE SAME DAY HE WENT TO COURT.
J. SACCO 3.93

While his trial isn't over, the settler needn't worry unduly about the scales of Israeli justice. From Dec. '87 to Oct. '91, settlers killed 42 Palestinians, and in that time only three trials have concluded. The stiffest sentence? Three years.
On the other hand, Palestinians killed 17 settlers during the same time period. Six of nine suspects captured in these incidents received life imprisonment; one received 20 years; six family homes were demolished. (The remaining two suspects were still in court.)
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE SETTLERS?
WHAT KIND OF FEELING WOULD YOU HAVE IF YOUR DOOR WAS SMASHED DOWN?
WOULD IT BE A FEELING OF LOVE?
YOU DON'T FEEL SECURE IN YOUR OWN HOME... YOUR OWN STREET...
WHO DO WE HAVE TO COMPLAIN TO? THE SOLDIERS?
Before we go someone hands Saburo a photo of the two dead youths...
Saburo doesn't say a thing the whole drive back. In Jerusalem he says he doesn't want the photo...
TOO HEAVY... TOO HEAVY...
And after a day like today, sure it's too heavy, even for a vulture like me. But—
I'LL TAKE IT.
...'cause faces are what it's all about, man...
...and I put the faces way in the bottom of my pack...
...I mean, who's to say they'll be too heavy tomorrow?
J. SACCO 3-93
71

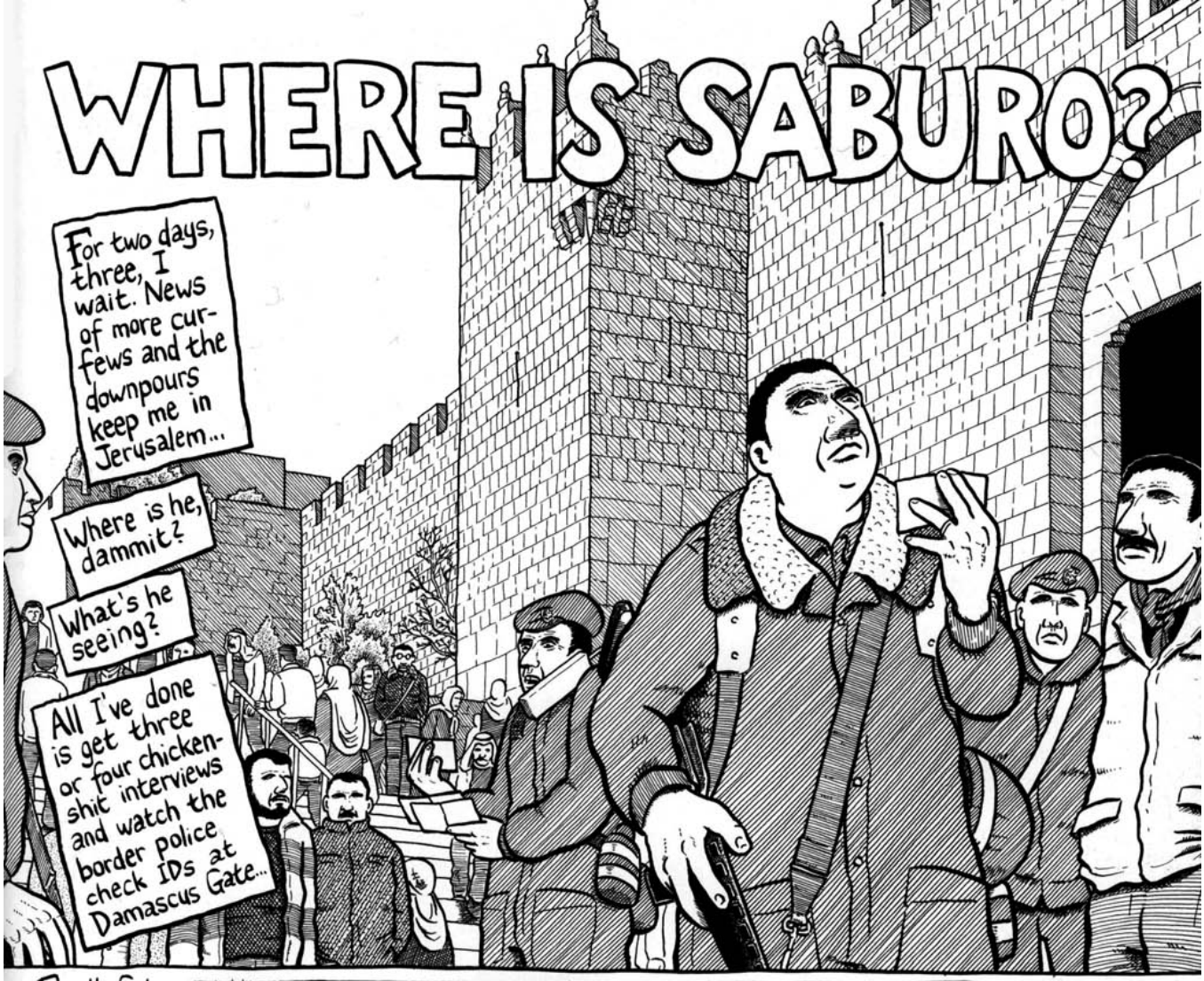
BROTHER FOR A DAY
My new friend Khaled, whom I met for the first time five minutes ago, has a problem...
I CALLED MY HOME IN TULKARM AND THEY TOLD ME THE SOLDIERS HAD COME LOOKING FOR ME LAST NIGHT...
LUCKILY, I WAS SPENDING THE NIGHT AT MY FRIEND'S IN KALANDIA...
WHAT DO THE SOLDIERS WANT?
MAYBE THEY WANT TO TAKE ME FOR ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'VE DONE WRONG...
I DON'T WANT TO GO TO PRISON AGAIN, NOT NOW...
IN TWO MONTHS I'M SUPPOSED TO GRADUATE...
THIS TENSION IS DRIVING ME MAD!
NO!
I'VE ALREADY GONE MAD!
We are walking 'round and 'round El Hussein Square in downtown Nablus, back and forth between vegetable and confectionery vendors, to and fro...
HA! IF THEY WANT TO TAKE ME TO PRISON, LET THEM! I DON'T CARE WHAT THEY DO TO ME! I AM WILLING TO SACRIFICE EVERYTHING FOR MY COUNTRY!
We bump into a couple of his university pals...
THIS ONE HAS BEEN IN JAIL MANY TIMES!
THIS ONE, THEY TRIED TO MAKE HIM JOIN THEM, BUT HE IS A PATRIOT!
His friends tell him they've heard Tulkarm is under curfew, no one knows why...
72

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
IF I GO TO TULKARM, MAYBE THE SOLDIERS WILL PICK ME UP...
...OR IF I'M STUCK THERE IN CURFEW, WHAT ABOUT MY CLASSES IN NABLUS?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
TOYS WOR
Suddenly, he lets go of my arm...
!
THAT ONE OVER THERE, I KNOW HIM FROM TULKARM... HE IS A COLLABORATOR... I DON'T WANT HIM TO SEE US TOGETHER...
Later...
I THINK I SHOULD SPEND THE NIGHT AT MY FRIEND'S IN KALANDIA AGAIN...
THIS WAY...
I KNOW A SHOPKEEPER WHO WILL LET ME USE HIS PHONE...
While Khaled makes his calls, the shopkeeper vents his spleen...
GUESS WHAT
THE JEWS ARE HORRIBLE! THEY TAX ME MUCH MORE THAN THIS PLACE IS WORTH, AND THEY FINE ME BECAUSE I CAN'T PAY...
THE OTHER DAY THE SOLDIERS STOPPED MY CAR AND MADE ME STAND WITH MY HANDS IN THE AIR LIKE A STATUE! YOU CALL THAT CIVILIZED?
Meanwhile, everything's set for Khaled, he's going to Kalandia...
Me, I gotta get to Balata camp. I'm supposed to meet Saburo there in the early afternoon...
But on the way to the taxis...
THIS ONE SAYS THERE IS A CURFEW ON BALATA CAMP.
BALATA CLOSED! BALATA CLOSED!
Now what?
© SACCO 3-93
73

Khaled says I ought to come with him to Kalandia...
We wait off the square to maybe get a cheaper taxi fare...
Khaled doesn't want to stand where the soldiers on the rooftops can see us...
...and every time a jeep goes by, he walks away from me...
Finally, a taxi with two places free pulls up...
IF THE SOLDIERS STOP US, DON'T SAY WE WERE TALKING ABOUT POLITICS...
But we've got at least 40 minutes, and I get Khaled's opinion on many things...
HAMAS IS NOT A TRUE ISLAMIC PARTY BECAUSE THEY ADVOCATE VIOLENCE.
THE POPULAR FRONT HAS SOME GOOD PEOPLE IN IT, BUT THEY DON'T SUPPORT THE PEACE TALKS...
WELL, I DON'T THINK THE ISRAELIS WANT PEACE, BUT IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO TRY.
And...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR WAY OF LIVING IN THE WEST... ALL THOSE DRUGS... I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR VALUES. I HAVE A GIRLFRIEND HERE, BUT I RESPECT HER... WE DON'T DO ANY BAD THINGS...
IN THE WEST, WE DON'T THINK OF SEX IN TERMS OF "BAD THINGS"...
I admit to him, however, I am currently emotionally dysfunctional owing to a recent, catastrophic, sexually open relationship...
SEE!
YEAH, OKAY, BUT WE HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THIS PART OF THE MUSLIM WORLD... FOR INSTANCE, THE FACT THAT SO MANY WOMEN ARE COVERED UP...
BUT THIS SHOWS WE RESPECT OUR WOMEN, AND IT KEEPS US FROM HAVING BAD THOUGHTS ABOUT THEM...
BUT IN THE WEST WE'D SAY THAT WOULD BE THE PROBLEM OF MEN...
BUT WHY IS THERE SO MUCH RAPE IN AMERICA?
and so on...
74

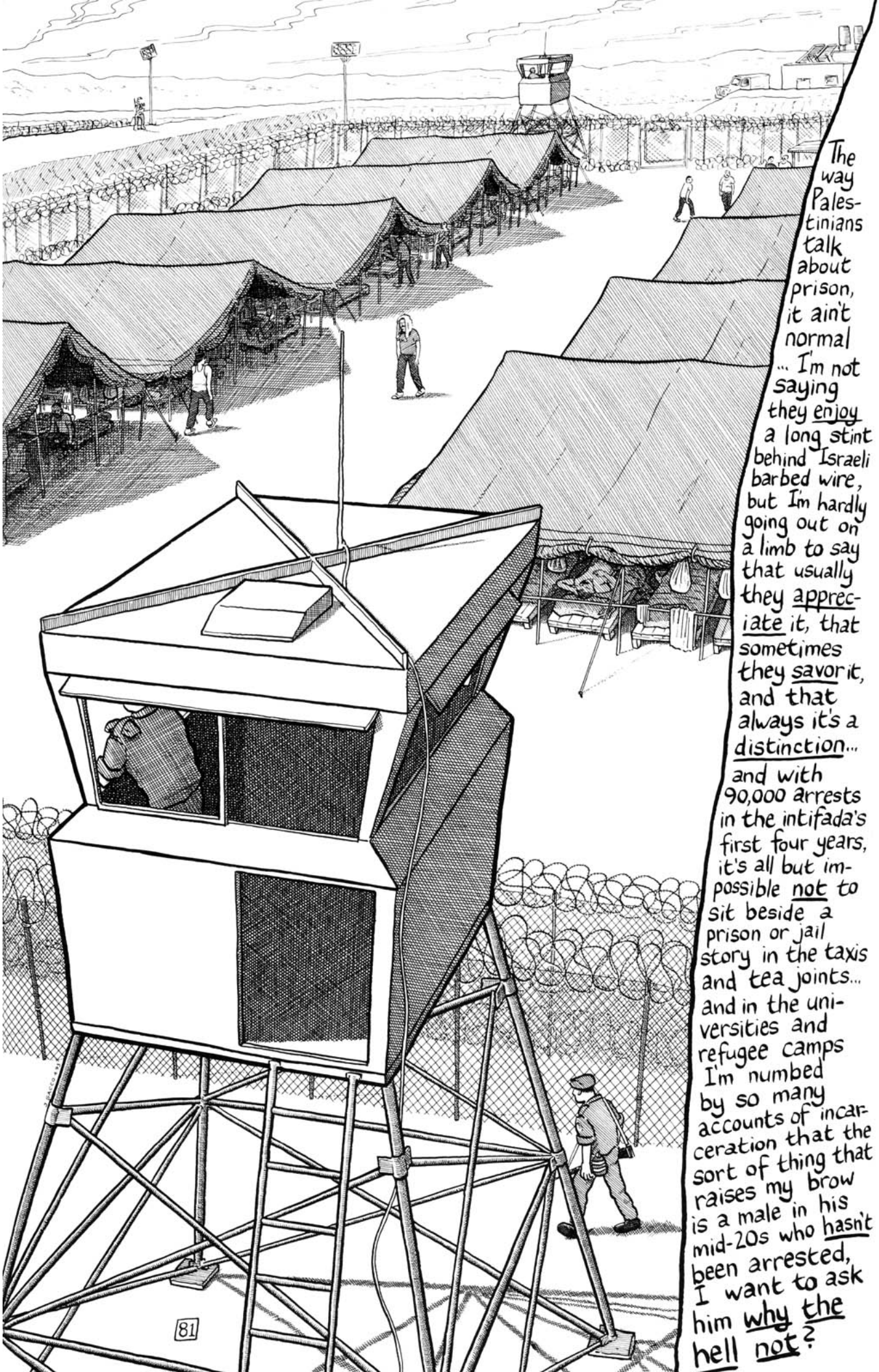
We arrive in Ramallah, take a bus to Kalandia, and slog through a torrential rain...
ALMOST THERE...
Christ, let's hope so...
At last inside, and I'm taken in and given the place of honor in front of the heater...
Khaled introduces me to the family of his friend... a middle-aged mom, her older husband, children of all ages and sizes...
AHLAN WA SAHLAN.
After I'm a little dried off, Khaled has me follow him into the kitchen to watch his washing up ritual before prayers...
YOU ARE MY MUSLIM BROTHER!
Back in the heated room, there's a spread waiting...
Tea!
Rice and lentils!
A fried egg!
Toasted pita bread!
Olives and tomato!
An orange!
Coffee!
The lady of the house, meanwhile, tells me through Khaled that she was married at 14, that she has ten children, three grandchildren ...she bounces one of the youngest, singing songs... I'm flashing on what Golda Meir once said about the high birthrate of "non-Jews," how she couldn't "sleep at night, thinking how many Arab babies are being born that same night..."
75

YOU ARE CATHOLIC?
YES.
CATHOLIC! WELCOME!
YOU ARE STAYING IN THE JEWISH QUARTER OF JERUSALEM?
NO.
THE JEWS ARE DOGS.
This time I can't let it go... I tell her talk like that makes me wince... anyway, lots of Jews don't agree with the occupation, I say, including Israeli Jews...
I tell them about a soldier who approached me in Nablus a couple of days ago. (His patrol had blocked off a roundabout and was making a Palestinian kid paint over some graffiti, but I don't tell them that part.)
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? TOURIST?
?
YEAH, TOURIST.
© SACCO 3.33
YOU SHOULD GO IN THERE AND HAVE A LOOK.
He gestured to the Old City, which even Palestinians had warned me never to enter alone...
IN THERE... A BEAUTIFUL MARKET.
The way he said "beautiful" ... I knew he wished he wasn't there as a soldier...
that's how I interpret it, anyway...
They listen to my story impassively...
Well, maybe I didn't tell it with enough emotional oomph...
I gave it a shot, but I suppose one loose anecdote doesn't bridge any gulfs...
Anyway... it's not like I'm here to mediate...
and let's face it, my comics blockbuster depends on conflict; peace won't pay the rent.
76



Finally Saburo comes back, his shoes muddy... Last time I saw him, the taxi had dropped him off at Balata camp ...From there he walked to Camp One, he says, where the soldiers had just sealed the house of a suspect and were popping tear gas to disperse a crowd... Later an angry Palestinian took him by the hand, wanted to show him something...

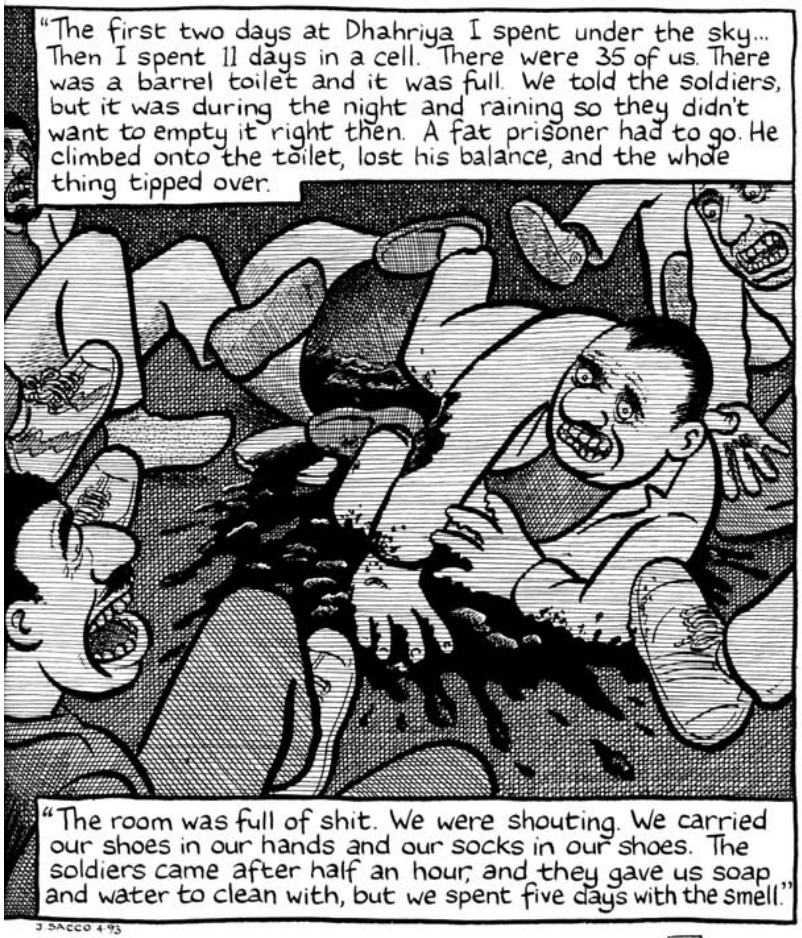
Chapter Four

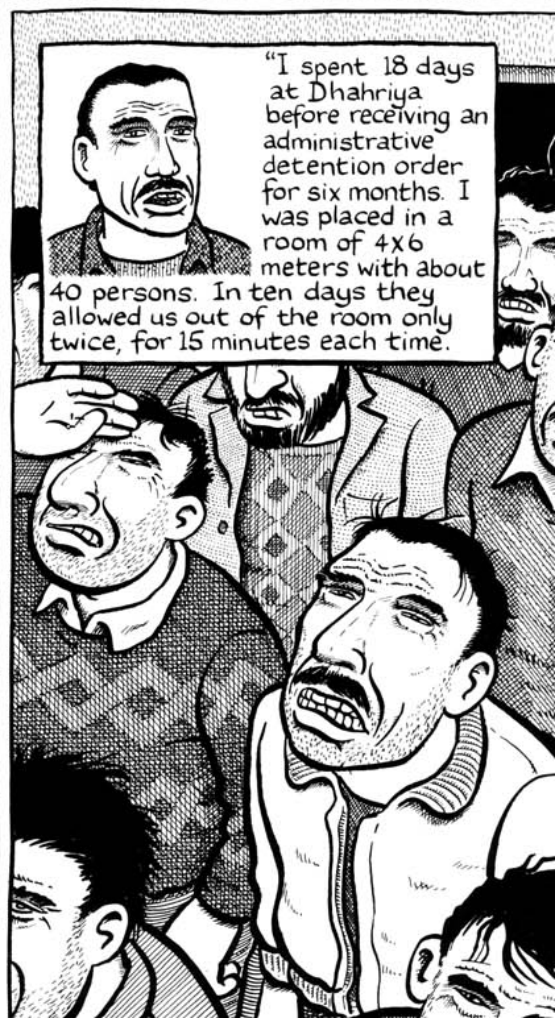

The way Palestinians talk about prison, it ain't normal ... I'm not saying they enjoy a long stint behind Israeli barbed wire, but I'm hardly going out on a limb to say that usually they appreciate it, that sometimes they savor it, and that always it's a distinction... and with 90,000 arrests in the intifada's first four years, it's all but impossible not to sit beside a prison or jail story in the taxis and tea joints... and in the universities and refugee camps I'm numbed by so many accounts of incarceration that the sort of thing that raises my brow is a male in his mid-20s who hasn't been arrested, I want to ask him why the hell not?

ANSAR III

There are other prisons, of course, but Ansar III, which the Israelis call Ketziot, is the largest, holding 6,000 inmates as of Nov. '91. It opened in March '88 specifically to deal with the intifada overflow...

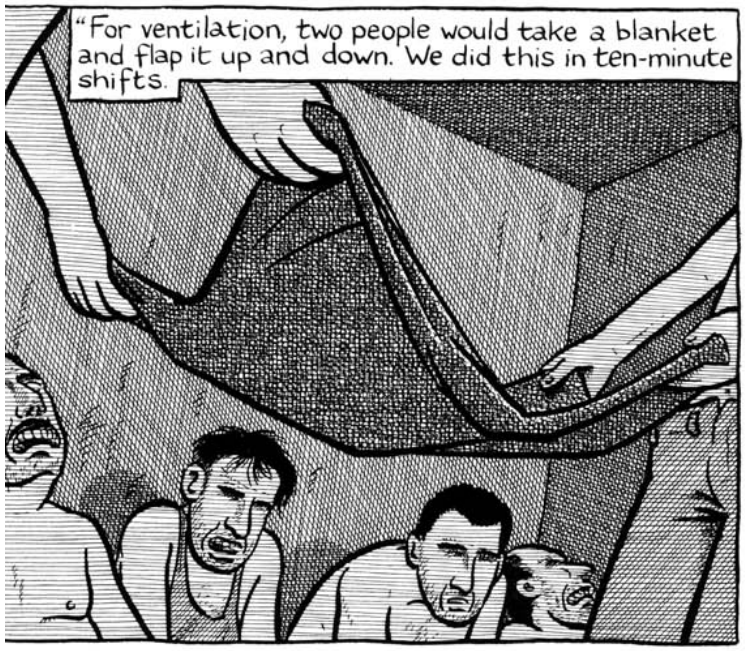
Our stories begin following Yusef's arrest in March '88 as he arrived at Dhahriya prison, south of Hebron in the West Bank, which also was Iyyad's starting point...
"It was during the Iron Fist period, during the policy of 'broken bones.' We were blindfolded and handcuffed and they beat us on the bus. When we got out we had to pass between two lines of soldiers who beat us. Two prisoners had arms broken. Then they ordered us to make animal noises and noises like a train. They beat us until we agreed to do this. Soldiers were having a barbeque nearby, including women soldiers.

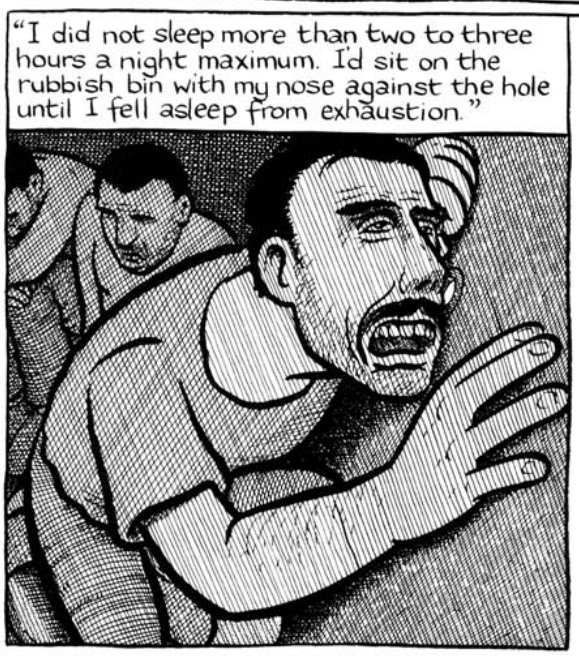

"The first two days at Dhahriya I spent under the sky... Then I spent 11 days in a cell. There were 35 of us. There was a barrel toilet and it was full. We told the soldiers, but it was during the night and raining so they didn't want to empty it right then. A fat prisoner had to go. He climbed onto the toilet, lost his balance, and the whole thing tipped over.
"The room was full of shit. We were shouting. We carried our shoes in our hands and our socks in our shoes. The soldiers came after half an hour, and they gave us soap and water to clean with, but we spent five days with the smell."

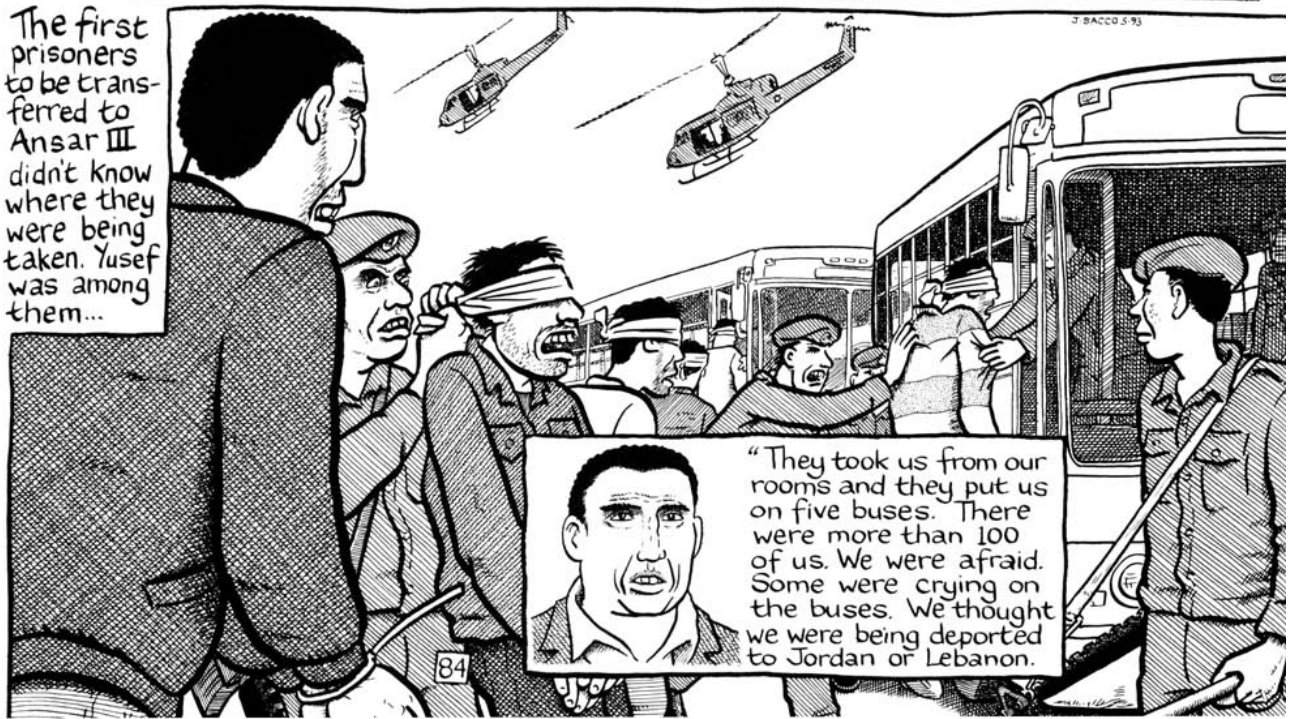

"I spent 18 days at Dhahriya before receiving an administrative detention order for six months. I was placed in a room of 4x6 meters with about 40 persons. In ten days they allowed us out of the room only twice, for 15 minutes each time.

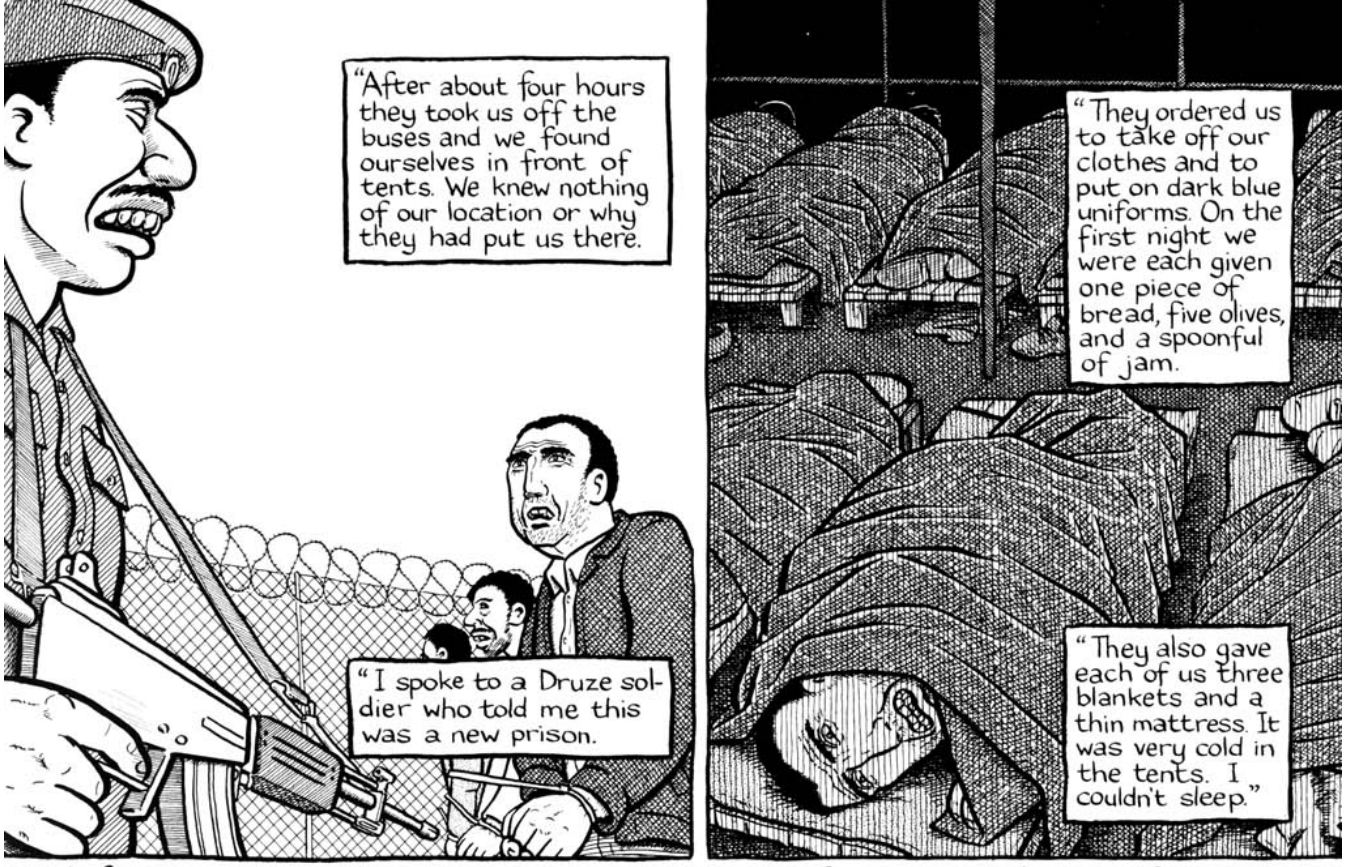
J. SACCO 4-93

"I was moved to a tent for two or three days, which was much better, but then they moved me to another room, which I considered a sort of hell. I remained in this room for a week. It was 3X4 meters, with 21 persons. The metal door faced the sun from noon on. The ventilation was very bad, just a coin-sized hole in the door for injecting gas in case of a riot.

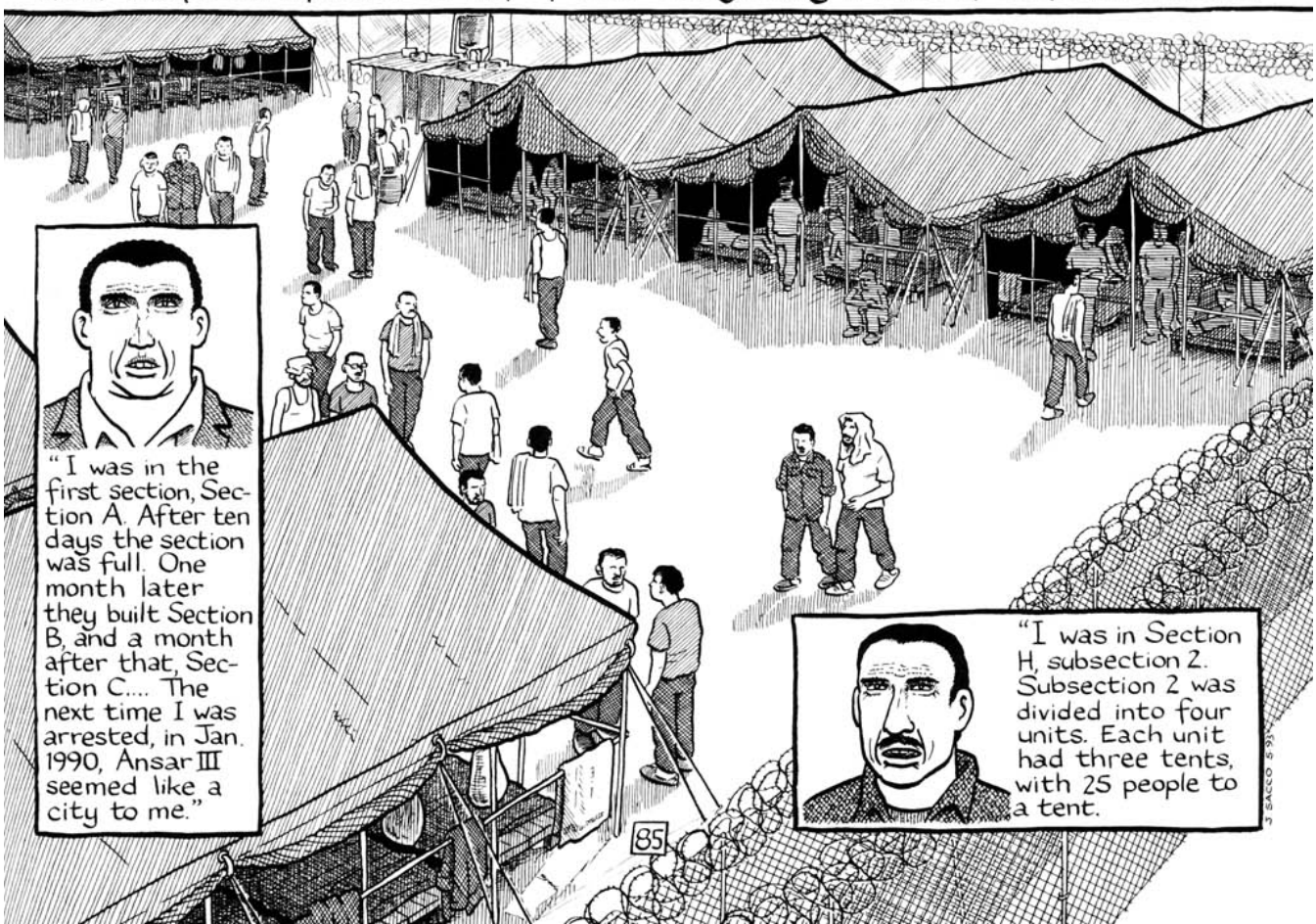

"For ventilation, two people would take a blanket and flap it up and down. We did this in ten-minute shifts.


"I did not sleep more than two to three hours a night maximum. I'd sit on the rubbish bin with my nose against the hole until I fell asleep from exhaustion."


The first prisoners to be transferred to Ansar III didn't know where they were being taken. Yusef was among them...
J. BACCO 5-93
"They took us from our rooms and they put us on five buses. There were more than 100 of us. We were afraid. Some were crying on the buses. We thought we were being deported to Jordan or Lebanon.
84

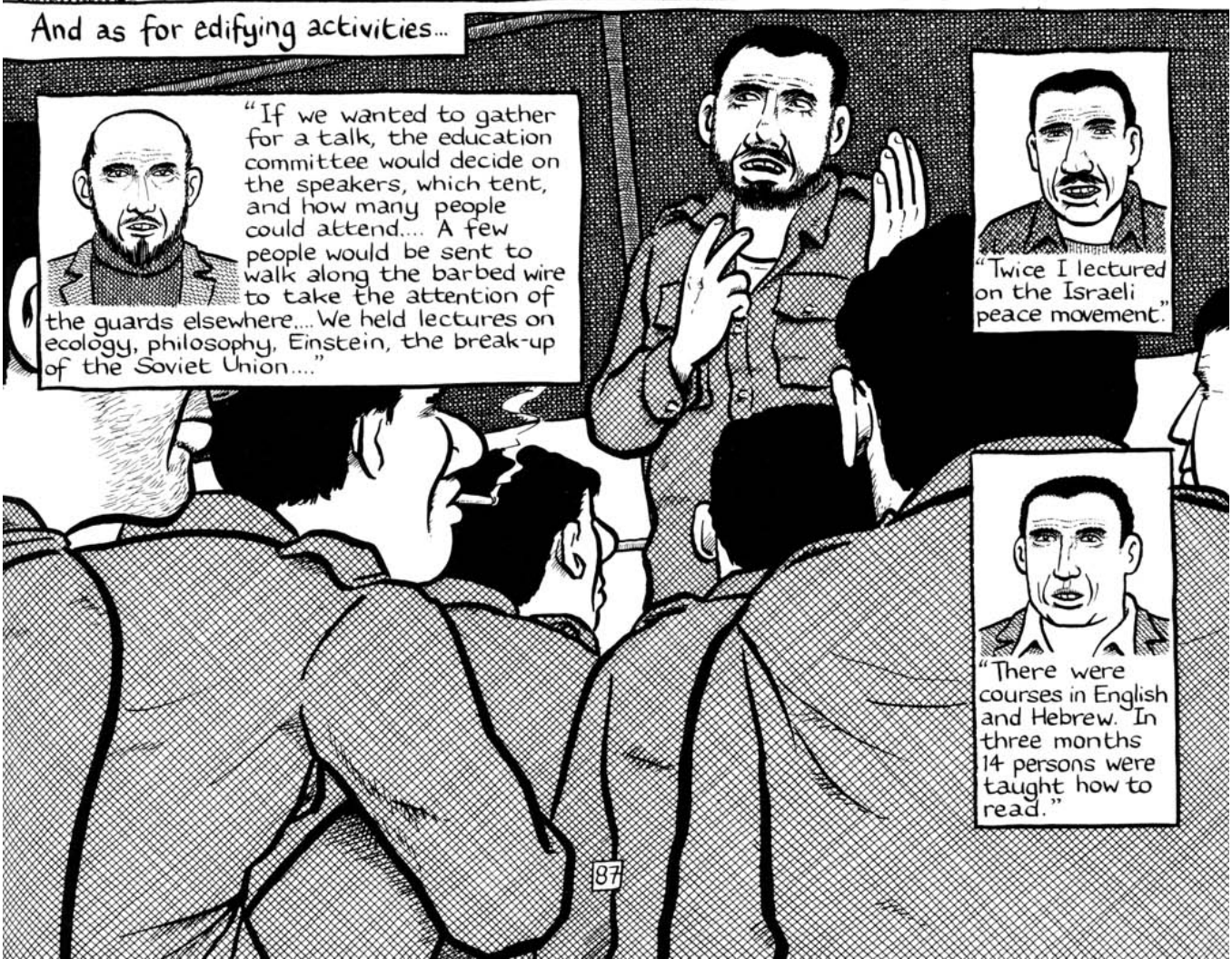


"We felt like animals," Yusef said, and he added a specific or two to the list of privations I'd already collected from other ex-prisoners: the desert temperature extremes; the insects; a water supply so insufficient it had to be utilized almost exclusively for drinking; a bland, inadequate diet; no change of clothes; little medical care... enough stuff, in other words, for another comics series...but let's not get bogged down by the bummed-behind-barbed-wire material 'cause, anyway, <u>some</u> things have improved with time and pressure... water, for example, is more readily available...writing implements are allowed, newspapers, too... and in Oct. '91 — three and a half years after Ansar III opened for business — regular family visits were arranged. In the meantime, the prison expanded to keep up with the growing number of intifada arrests...



"Out of the five subsections, two were called cages. Each unit in a cage was surrounded by prefabricated cement walls, with an iron net on top. A prisoner in a cage would see nothing but three tents, the walls, and the sky. The cages were used to isolate leaders and activists."
"We communicated with other sections by throwing messages tied to stones or pieces of dried bread. These were called 'post-balls' or the 'fax.'"
According to Yusef, the prisoners—who included doctors, teachers, lawyers, and journalists—soon began discussing ways of organizing themselves...
"In the first days we didn't have any organization. We wanted order. Our first success was forming one line for the W.C."
"Being stuck in a yard with 250 guys might seem like hell to some people, with only three toilets and hot water once every three weeks.... We were in charge of distributing our food ourselves, and there was only one plate for every four detainees... so we had to be organized. We formed committees to organize these things."
A couple of examples of how these committees function might prove instructive, and naturally my ears pricked up when Mohammed mentioned something called "the tea committee"....
J. SACCO 5.91
86

"Prisoners working in the kitchen would bring the tea in a big pot. The tea committee had to make sure that distribution of the tea was fair, so that no one complained, and fast, so that the tea was served hot.
"The tea committee served everyone once, and then began serving from the beginning of the line again until the leftover was gone. The tea monitor in the tent would take note of who was next in line for tea so that he would be first served next time.
"There's a problem the moment you start goofing with fairness. Prison is a small world where a cup of tea is something, a piece of soap is something."


And as for edifying activities...
"If we wanted to gather for a talk, the education committee would decide on the speakers, which tent, and how many people could attend.... A few people would be sent to walk along the barbed wire to take the attention of the guards elsewhere.... We held lectures on ecology, philosophy, Einstein, the break-up of the Soviet Union...."
"Twice I lectured on the Israeli peace movement."
"There were courses in English and Hebrew. In three months 14 persons were taught how to read."

"Ansar is our university," a student in Bethlehem once told me, and he added a story so tidy I chalked it up to apocrypha (but who knows?): A Bir Zeit University professor was sent to Ansar III and found himself in the same tent as some of his students—so he continued his course and even administered an exam...

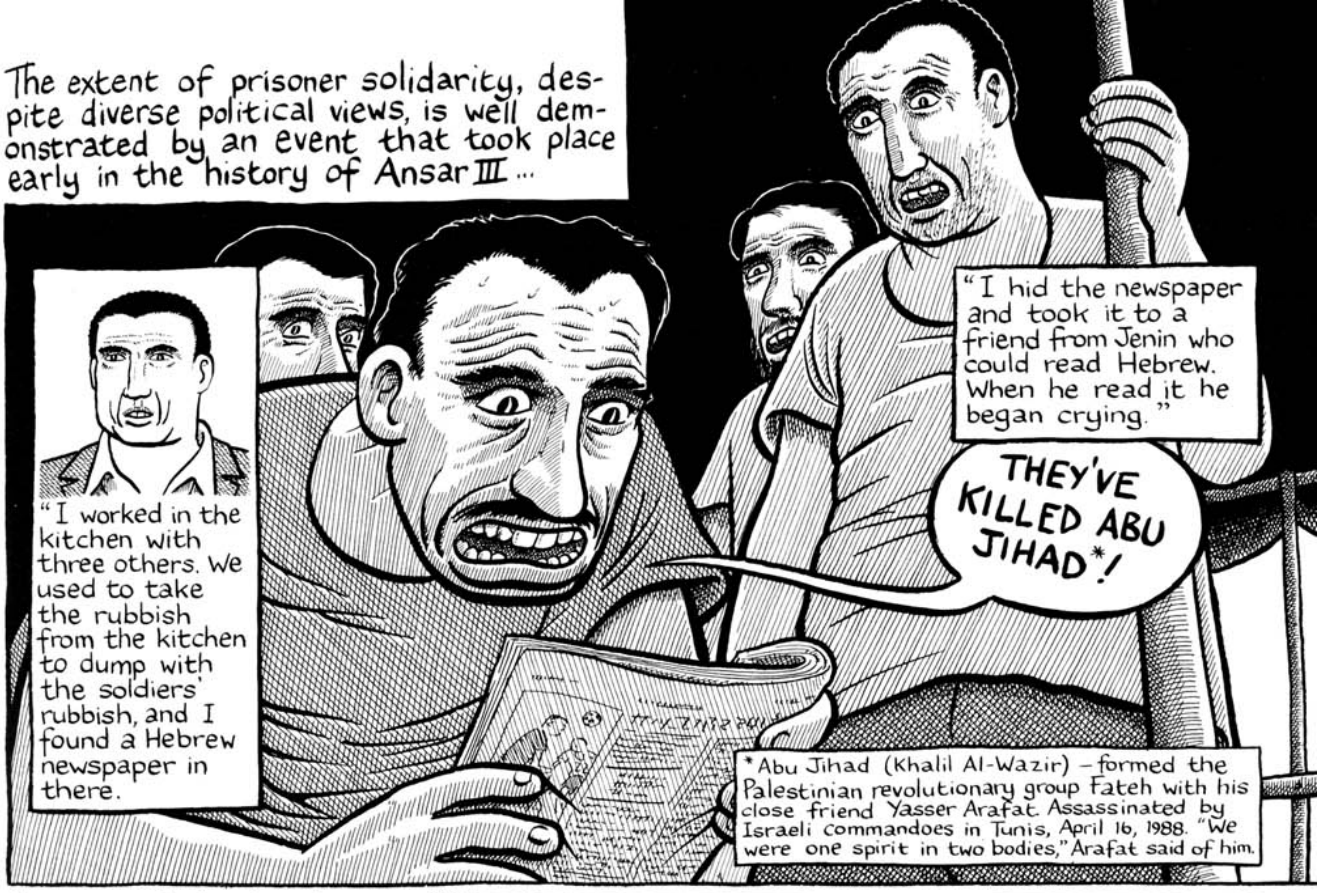
Besides lectures and studies, Yusef said, prisoners put on skits that demonstrated Israeli interrogation methods and on one occasion a play that dramatized the death of a Palestinian in custody...

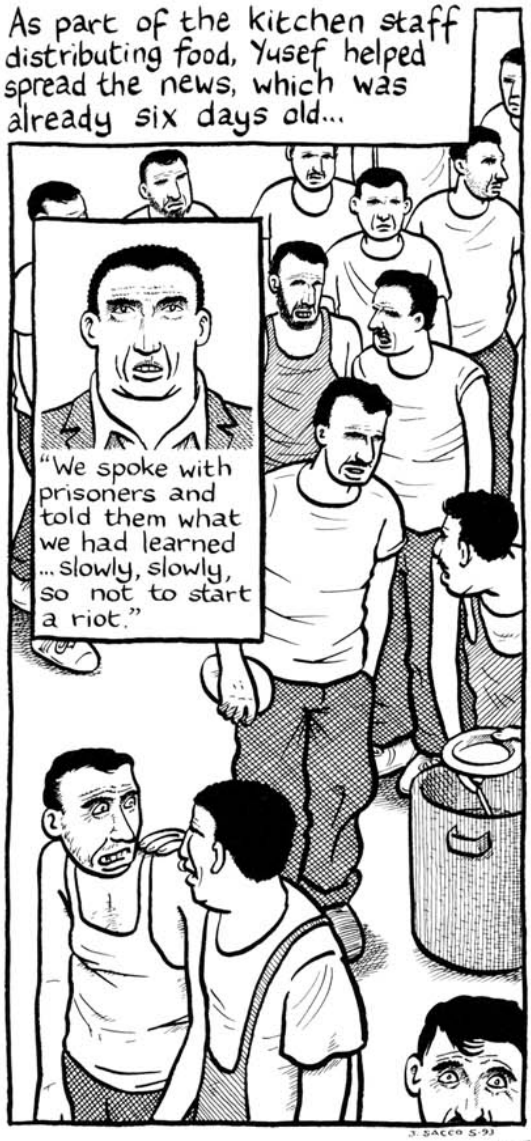
"The play was under three tents we had joined together. At the end, everyone clapped, and the soldiers fired tear gas."

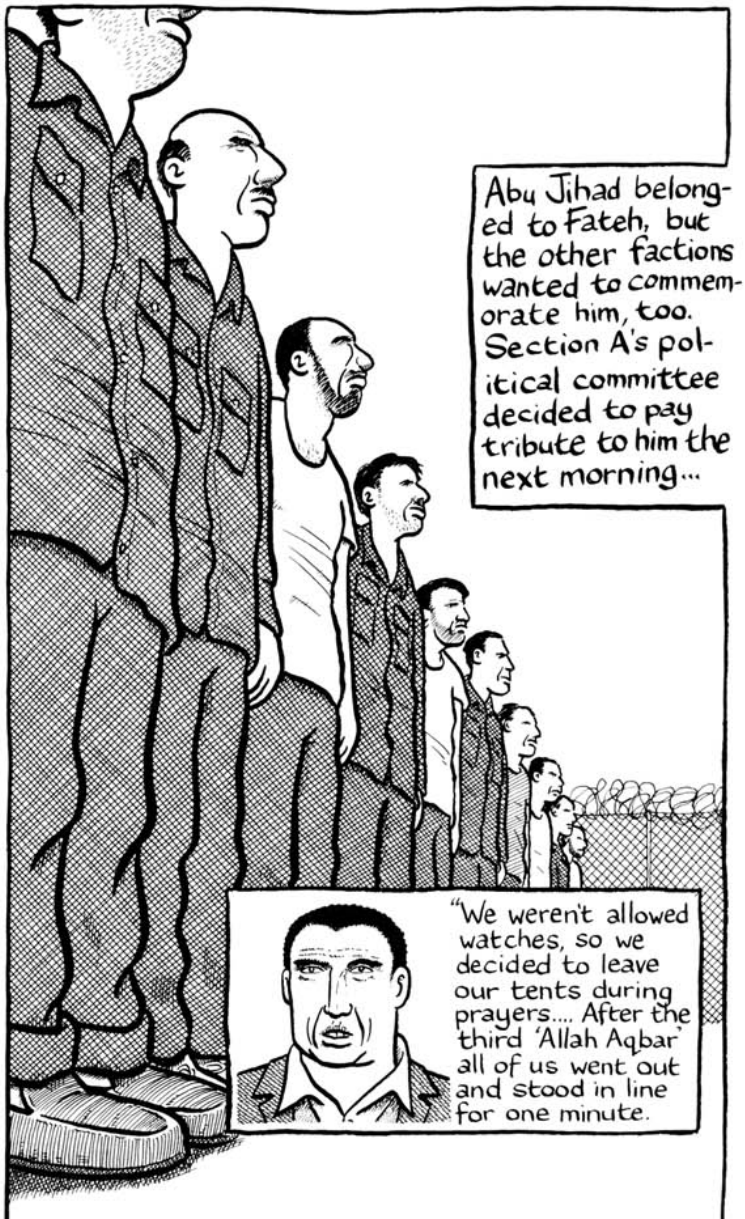
All the activities and organizational structures mentioned here, as well as prisoner discipline, were controlled by political committees representing the various factions of the PLO – Fateh, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front, the Communists, etc.

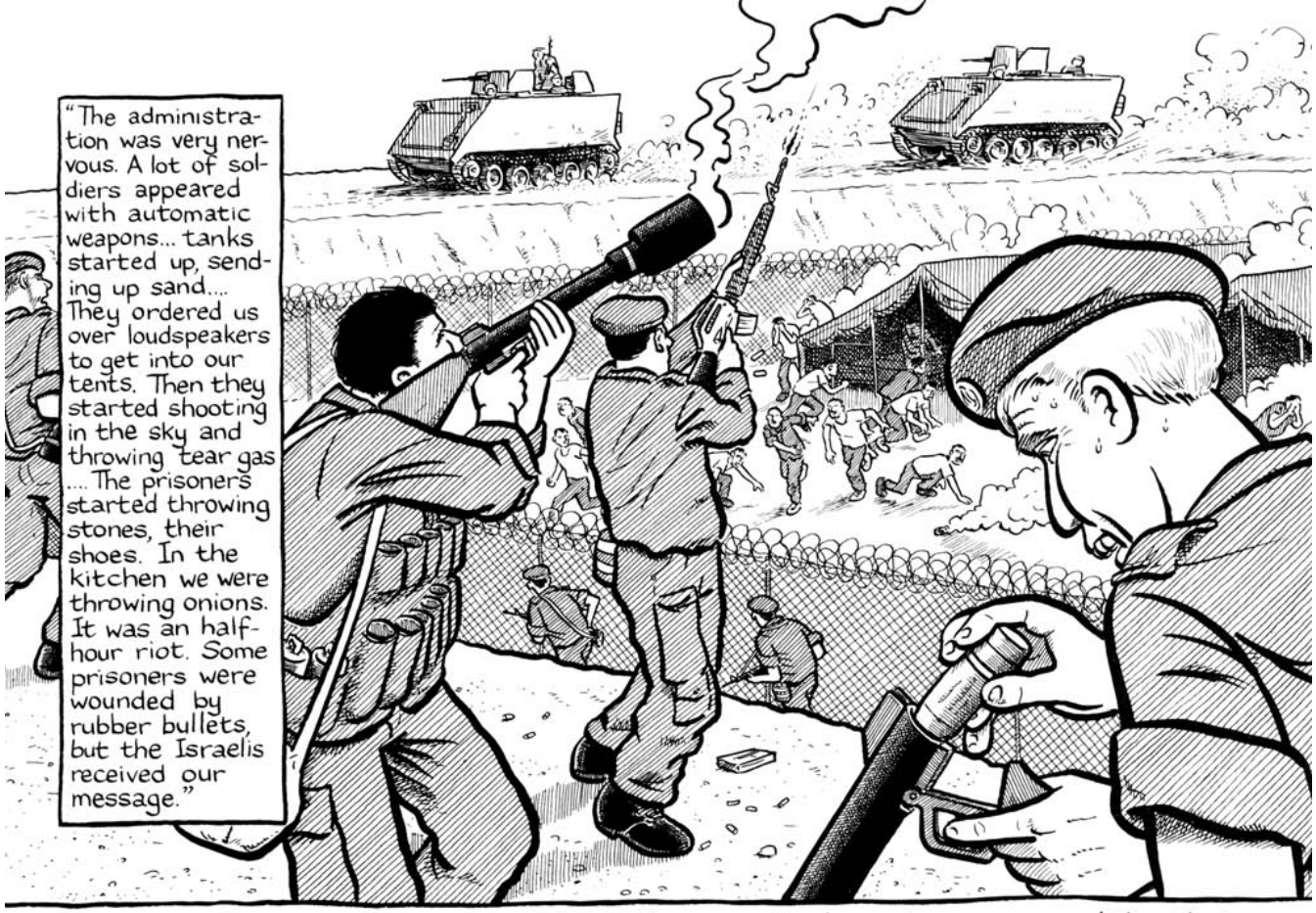
"Every new prisoner entering the compound had to affiliate himself with a faction – not for political reasons, but for purposes of organization. This did not imply he was a member of that group... but he had to answer to the group for certain responsibilities, and the group became responsible for his rights and duties.

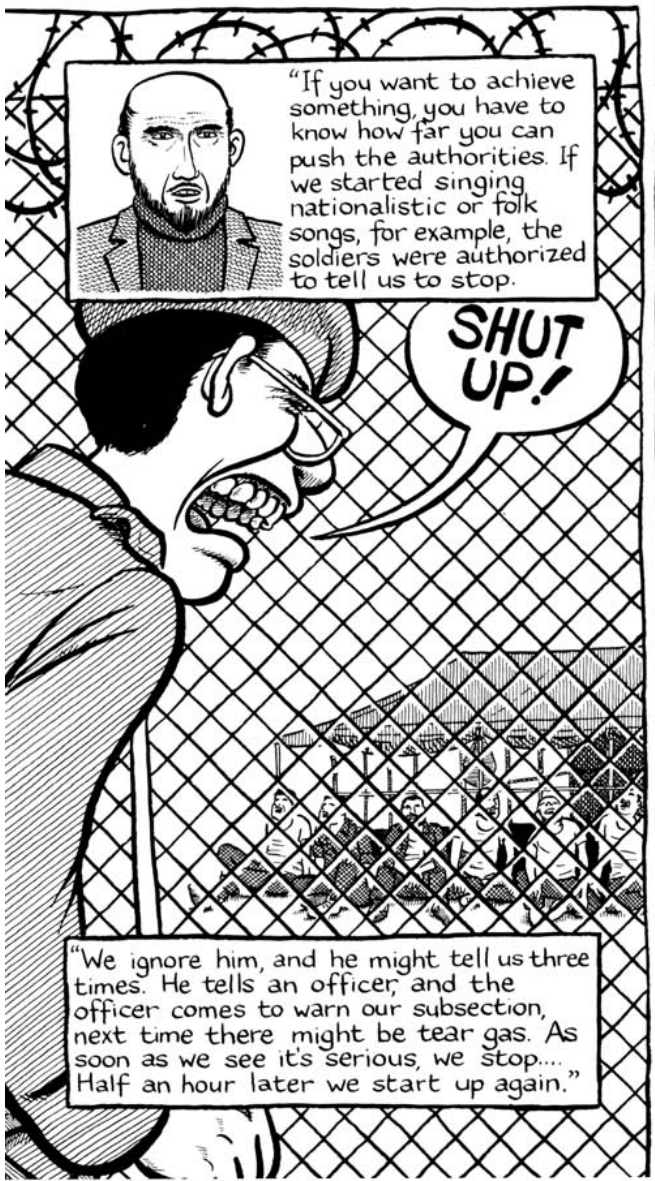
"No one was allowed to speak to new prisoners when they came in, so there would be no question of recruiting. The prisoner would be taken to a tent where a committee of four would ask him to choose a political faction.... The only disadvantage to this system was that it was highly centralized."


The extent of prisoner solidarity, despite diverse political views, is well demonstrated by an event that took place early in the history of Ansar III...
"I worked in the kitchen with three others. We used to take the rubbish from the kitchen to dump with the soldiers' rubbish, and I found a Hebrew newspaper in there.
"I hid the newspaper and took it to a friend from Jenin who could read Hebrew. When he read it he began crying."
THEY'VE KILLED ABU JIHAD*!
*Abu Jihad (Khalil Al-Wazir) – formed the Palestinian revolutionary group Fateh with his close friend Yasser Arafat. Assassinated by Israeli commandoes in Tunis, April 16, 1988. "We were one spirit in two bodies," Arafat said of him.

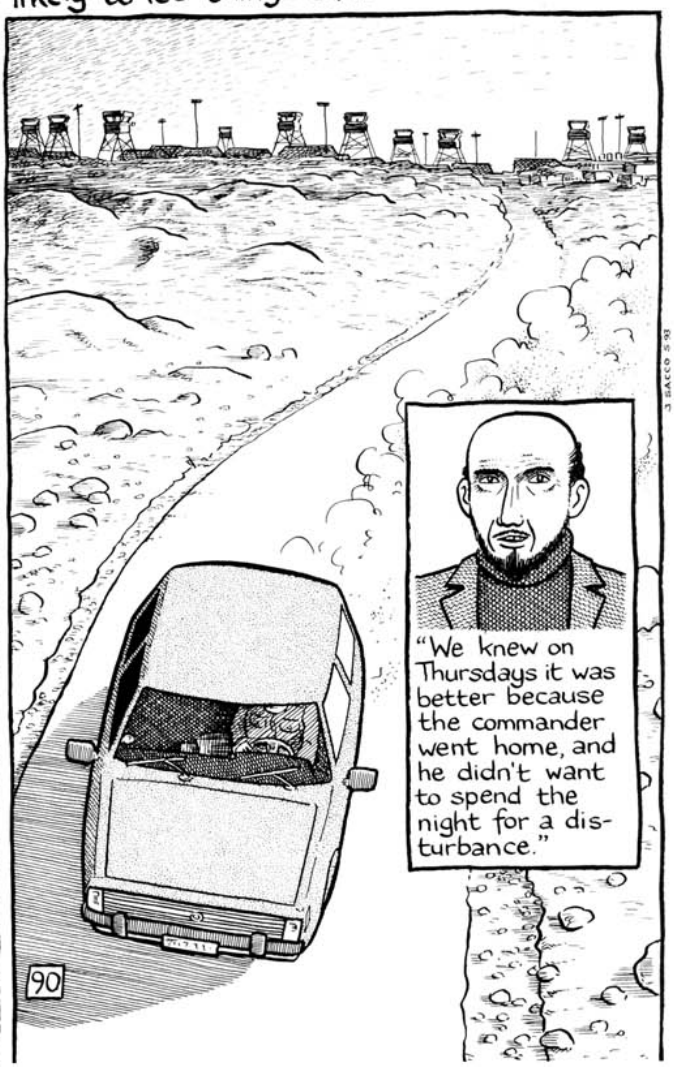

As part of the kitchen staff distributing food, Yusef helped spread the news, which was already six days old...
"We spoke with prisoners and told them what we had learned ... slowly, slowly, so not to start a riot."
J. SACCO 5-93


Abu Jihad belonged to Fateh, but the other factions wanted to commemorate him, too. Section A's political committee decided to pay tribute to him the next morning...
"We weren't allowed watches, so we decided to leave our tents during prayers.... After the third 'Allah Aqbar' all of us went out and stood in line for one minute.





Prisoners also learned to accommodate their activities to the schedules of the guards, determining when the Israelis were more likely to let things slide...



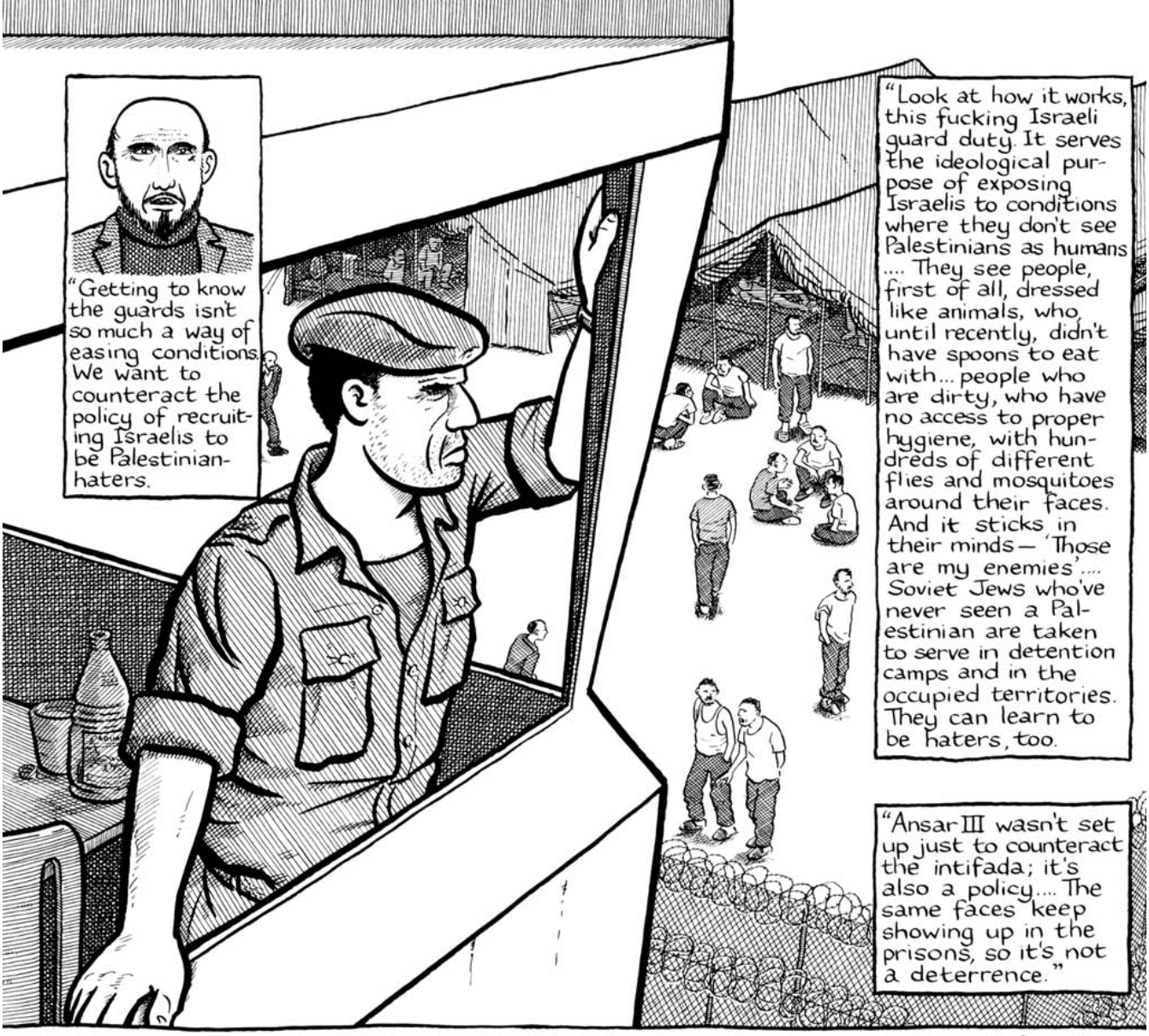
Also, the lecture schedule was "usually intensified during the final days of the soldiers' duty when they were less likely to interfere," according to Mohammed...

"The soldiers rotate every 15 days. At first they have stereotypes about the prisoners. They act tough. They watch out for 'postballs' and make searches... After seven or ten days they see things differently, they're impressed with our organization. The moment they start to relax and act as humans, we have about three days with them ...and then we get another bunch of bastards."

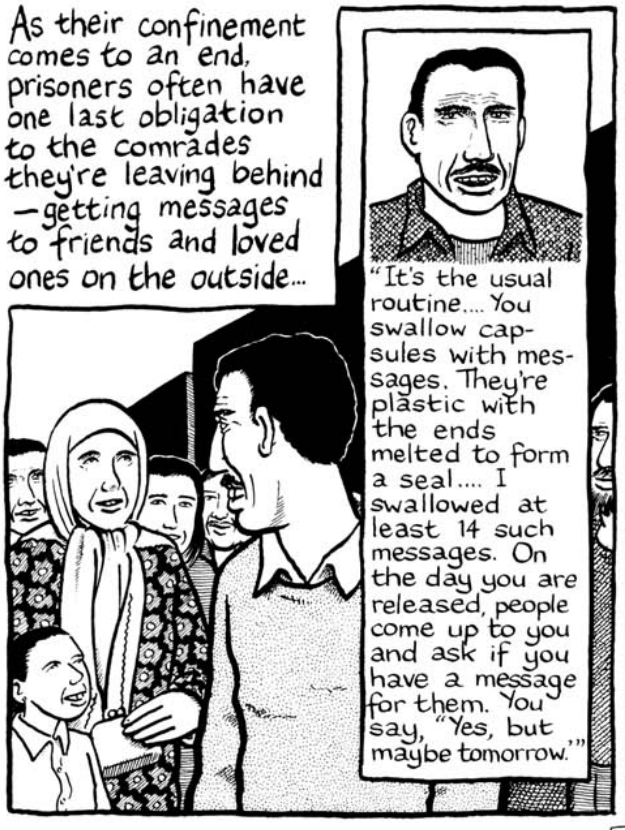
"The last time I was in Ansar III, I had good relations with some soldiers. I talked to an American Israeli who told me he was surprised by our conditions, but he couldn't refuse to serve.

"And I had a friend who used to work in Haifa, and after three months in Ansar his old boss, a Jew, ended up being one of the guards. He gave my friend some cigarettes."

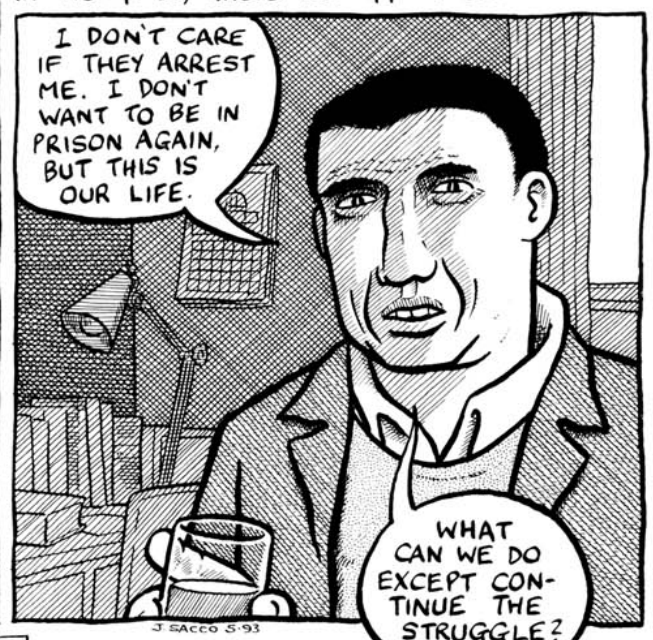
J. SACCO © '93



As their confinement comes to an end, prisoners often have one last obligation to the comrades they're leaving behind — getting messages to friends and loved ones on the outside...



The first time he was released from Ansar III, Yusef told me, was the happiest moment of his life. Many people, journalists, came to greet him. When the Israelis arrested him again, four months later, he was here in his office, where we sipped tea...



'MODERATE PRESSURE'
PART 1
WELCOME! WELCOME!
Jabril's home is my home...
He rolls out the red carpet about as far as it will go in Balata refugee camp...
He sticks the kerosene heater against my knees...
He barks some orders and his brothers bring in tea...
then coffee...
WEL-COME!
All right, now down to business...
I want to hear about his two months' grilling in Nablus prison, the time the Israelis accused him of training with the Popular Front...
HE SAID, 'JABRIL, TELL ME EVERYTHING. EVERYTHING IS ALREADY IN THE COM-PUTER.'
I SAID, 'IF YOU KNOW EVERYTHING, WHY DO YOU ASK ME?'
HE SAID, 'I WANT TO HEAR IT FROM YOU...'
In the middle of Jabril's story, Abu Akram shows up...
Has he ever been inter-rogated?
Sure, he says.
BEATEN?
He looks at me like, are you being serious?
HOW WERE YOU BEATEN? CAN YOU DESCRIBE IT?
You know, he says, beaten ... don't I under-stand beaten?
J. SACCO '93
93

Okay, he says...
Come here...
Sit down...
This way, without the backrest...
SIT! SIT!
HANDS BEHIND!
LEAN BACK!
HA HA HA THIS IS HIGHLY IRREGULAR.
Okay okay, I get the point... vicarious experiences are one thing, but — but still I'm fascinated, still I want itsy-bitsy details, descriptions of the crunching sounds... 'cause I was raised a suburban schoolboy... horror was at the movies... torture was something that happened to a cat down the block, and, otherwise, my frame-of-reference was Winston Smith and wax museums... but now I'm here with the real McCoys, former guests of the Shin Bet, Israel's internal security organ, and I insist they indulge me...
J. SACCO 5.93
THEY MADE ME STRIP AND THEY TIED ME TO THE ROOF, AND THEY LEFT ME FOUR HOURS IN THE RAIN...
THEY SAID THEY WOULD FUCK MY MOTHER AND SISTERS. THEY SAID THEY WOULD KILL THEM.
Don't worry...
He stops short...
He doesn't do it...
He spares me...
THE DOOR HE CLOSES, AND THE WORLD CANNOT SEE.
94

Sure it's worse somewhere else... it always is, isn't it? But we're talking about Israel now, "the Middle East's only democracy," and this kind of thing troubled the Israelis, too, so in '87 the government commissioned a retired supreme court president, Justice Moshe Landau, to investigate...

The Landau report determined, indeed, that Shin Bet officers consistently had lied in court by denying they'd extracted confessions through physical force... and, incidentally, the report recommended that no charges be brought against those responsible...

And the Landau report reasoned that, in the interest of defending Israel from "terrorist activity," the Shin Bet must be allowed some means of "non-violent psychological pressure" and "moderate... physical pressure" in its interrogations... Just what constituted such permissible pressure was outlined in Part II of the report, which has been kept secret... but rest assured that it included (in the report's wording) nothing "disproportionate," nothing on the "level of physical torture," nothing that "deprives [a suspect] of his human dignity...."

So Justice Landau got the Israel Prize and Israel goes on being "the Middle East's only democracy"... and Palestinians go on being interrogated, though now within secret guidelines, subject to who-knows-what interpretations, and, whatever else you want to say about the "new" methods, now they're legal...

Stop me if you've heard this one, I heard this one twice...

A PALESTINIAN JOKE

Three secret agents were walking along the edge of a forest. One was CIA, one was KGB, one was Shin Bet...

They saw a rabbit running into the trees and they decided to see how fast each of them could capture it...

The CIA man went first and returned with the rabbit in ten minutes...

They let the rabbit go again...

The KGB agent returned with the rabbit in only five minutes...

The Shin Bet fellow was not impressed...

THAT'S NOTHING.

LET THE RABBIT GO AGAIN.

The Shin Bet officer went after the rabbit...

The other two agents waited... five minutes passed... ten minutes... 20... 40...

SOMETHING'S GONE WRONG.

They entered the forest to look for their Israeli colleague...

They walked for a long time... going deeper and deeper into the woods...

Finally, they heard noise — yelling and screaming...

...and they followed the sound to a clearing...

ADMIT YOU'RE THE RABBIT!

ADMIT YOU'RE THE RABBIT!

THE TOUGH AND THE DEAD

Someone in the Gaza Strip once told me, "When you are under interrogation, you forget the name of your father." Me? I wonder how long I'd last getting the business behind a closed door... Not long I bet, but I'm a Pussy First Class... a harsh word and a dirty look and I'd be screaming for Amnesty Int'l....

I meet a Palestinian woman about my age, though, who is one tough cookie...

Two years ago she did 18 days in Jerusalem's notorious Russian Compound, courtesy of the Shin Bet...

And still she's bitter about the guys who squealed on her, who named her for something she says she didn't do — underwriting nationalistic pamphlets...

SOME OF THEM WERE ARRESTED IN THE MORNING AND DENOUNCED ME IN THE AFTERNOON...

THEY COULDN'T TOLERATE ONE DAY OF PAIN...

NOT ONLY WERE THEIR BODIES WEAK, BUT THEIR MINDS WERE WEAK, THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE NATIONAL CAUSE WAS WEAK...

"The Shin Bet confronted me with one of them, and when I asked him if he even knew me, he said no..."

TAKE HIM BACK, AND NEXT TIME TELL HIM WHAT TO SAY.

97

EVEN IF THEY BEAT HIM ON THE GENITALS, IT HURTS ONCE, IT HURTS TWICE...

And after that, she says, you don't feel it so much...

I beg to differ, of course, but who am I to take issue with a person of her mettle... She's done months in prison, she's been arrested four times...

And in the Russian Compound the Shin Bet stood her up in the "coffin" half a day after she'd undergone a liver biopsy...

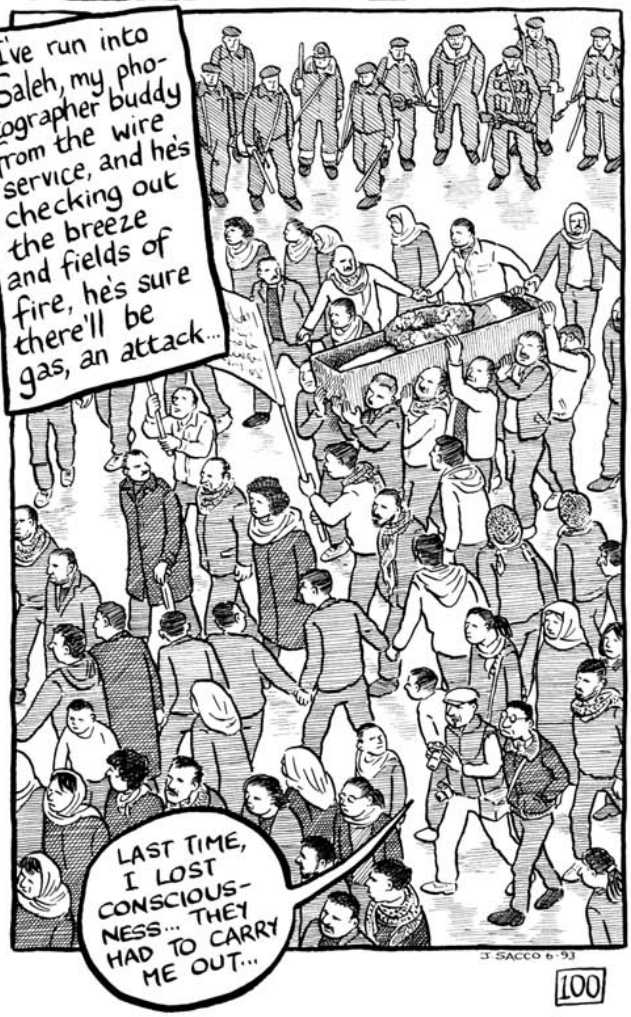
"It's a small closet, you stand up in it, it's 80 X 60 cm, two meters high, very dark... I had lumps in my legs, I couldn't stand up, I was still feeling the anesthetic... It was cold... I fell unconscious..."

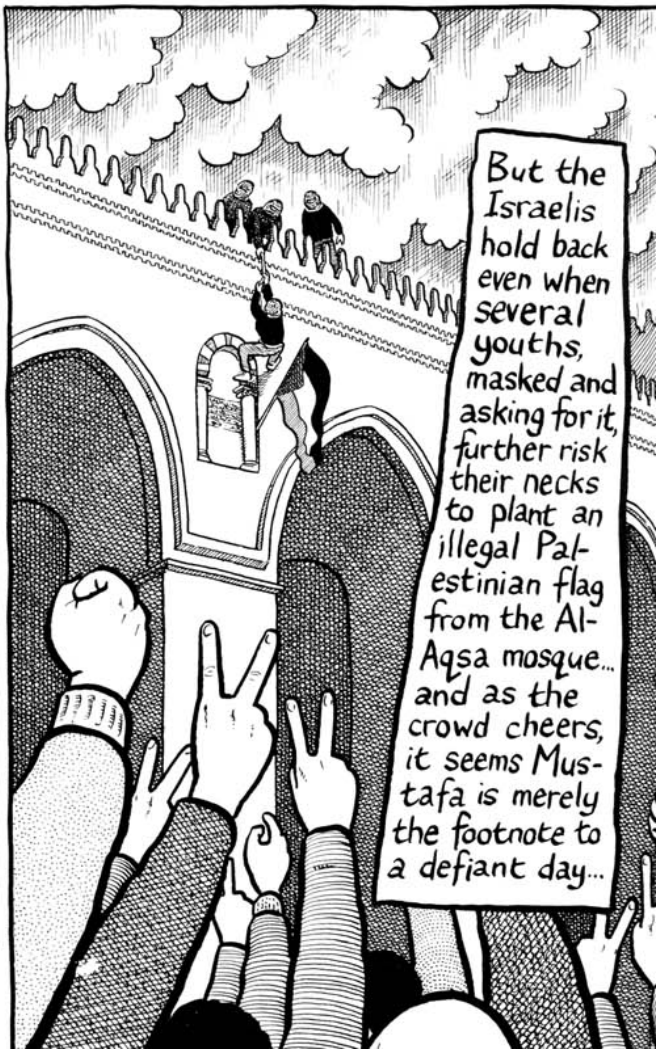
J. Sacco © 97

Some time later the door opened, the air revived her...
YOU'RE NOT DEAD YET?
I WANT TO VOMIT.
And they tied her and hooded her —the Palestinians call this technique "Al-Shabah"— "sometimes four hours, sometimes the whole day... sometimes they take you in the middle of the night for this."
They made her sit up straight with a metal bar pressing down the center of her back, she says, they hit her when she leaned against the wall...
But worst of all was isolation, her cell, which was besmirched with filth, she says, and where she was left without toilet paper and sanitary napkins...
She longed for the interrogations, when she'd have someone to talk to... "I'd have fun with them"... she says she'd figured out the Shin Bet...
"They have some information against you. First they want you to confirm the information. Second, they want you to provide additional information, to implicate others..."
The Shin Bet reckoned they could play the twin cards of gender and Arab culture against her... They implied a long imprisonment would ruin her marriage prospects...
WE DON'T ARREST GIRLS. WE KNOW YOUR SITUATION AS A GIRL IN YOUR SOCIETY. NO ONE WILL MARRY YOU.
IN 25 YEARS I'LL BE OUT, THEY'LL BE STANDING IN LINE FOR ME, BUT YOU MAY BE DEAD.
98

And they threatened rape, she says... they accused her of using a trip overseas to find sexual partners...
YES, WHY NOT? I WANTED A CHANGE.
Once she'd made clear they couldn't intimidate her sexually, the Shin Bet abandoned that tack—and eventually the interrogation itself...
As she was released, they gave her a package from her parents they'd been withholding, chocolates and cigarettes ... a Shin Bet officer asked her for a piece of Cadbury's...
I WANT TO BE FRANK. IF ALL THE WOMEN WE INTERROGATE WERE LIKE YOU, WE'D HAVE TO CLOSE THE RUSSIAN COMPOUND. YOU ARE STRONG.
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
Suspicious till the end, and, like I said, one tough cookie...
But what about Mustafa Akkawi?
How tough was he?
Two weeks of Israeli interrogation and he's a dead man, his family's crying, and we're churning up his front yard to get it all on film...
99

It's a wet February day, a day of bullhorns and chants for a "martyr"...
A wonder the Israelis are permitting such a demonstrative funeral procession... I suppose it's time to let the Palestinians blow off a little patriotic steam...


I've run into Saleh, my photographer buddy from the wire service, and he's checking out the breeze and fields of fire, he's sure there'll be gas, an attack...
LAST TIME, I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS... THEY HAD TO CARRY ME OUT...
J SACCO 6-93


But the Israelis hold back even when several youths, masked and asking for it, further risk their necks to plant an illegal Palestinian flag from the Al-Aqsa mosque... and as the crowd cheers, it seems Mustafa is merely the footnote to a defiant day...

Mustafa Akkawi...
...36 years old, a husband, father of a one year old, a distributor for a small cosmetics firm...
...but he's just a box to me, the Israelis suspected him of membership in the Popular Front...
...and, for the record, he's Palestinian number eight to die during interrogation since the Shin Bet started applying "moderate pressure" on suspects...
The American pathologist called in by the family to conduct an autopsy determined Mustafa "died of a heart attack precipitated by the emotional pressure, physical exertion and freezing temperature he was forced to withstand, along with lack of proper medical care." The Israeli government says torture had nothing to do with it. A heart attack is a heart attack is a heart attack. The file is closed.

Saleh is still waiting for the charge...
THEY WILL COME FROM THIS WAY.
J. SACCO 6-91

But the police don't interfere, and under Jerusalem's Old City walls a box goes peacefully into the ground...
101

'MODERATE PRESSURE' PART 2

Make no mistake, everywhere you go, not just in Marvel Comics, there's parallel universes... Here? On the surface streets: traffic, couples in love, falafel-to-go, tourists in jogging suits licking stamps for postcards... And over the wall behind closed doors: other things — people strapped to chairs, sleep deprivation, the smell of piss... other things happening for "reasons of national security" ... for "security reasons"... to combat "terrorist activity"... they were happening to Ghassan a week and a half ago, he shows me his back and wrists, he's still got the marks... he's a fresh case, all right ... right off the rack...

Now he's back in his middle class living room in East Jerusalem offering tea and goodies to a guest... Four weeks ago he was a suspect, arrested in the same sweep that got Mustafa Akkawi — remember him? — the guy we just buried...

Ghassan tells me his story, his kids climbing all over him.

And soon his little girl is fast asleep... Probably she's too young to understand, or else she's heard it all before... in any case, she's asleep...

And sleep is where Ghassan's story starts... where stories like this always start... when people are asleep...

And then the door gets bashed down...

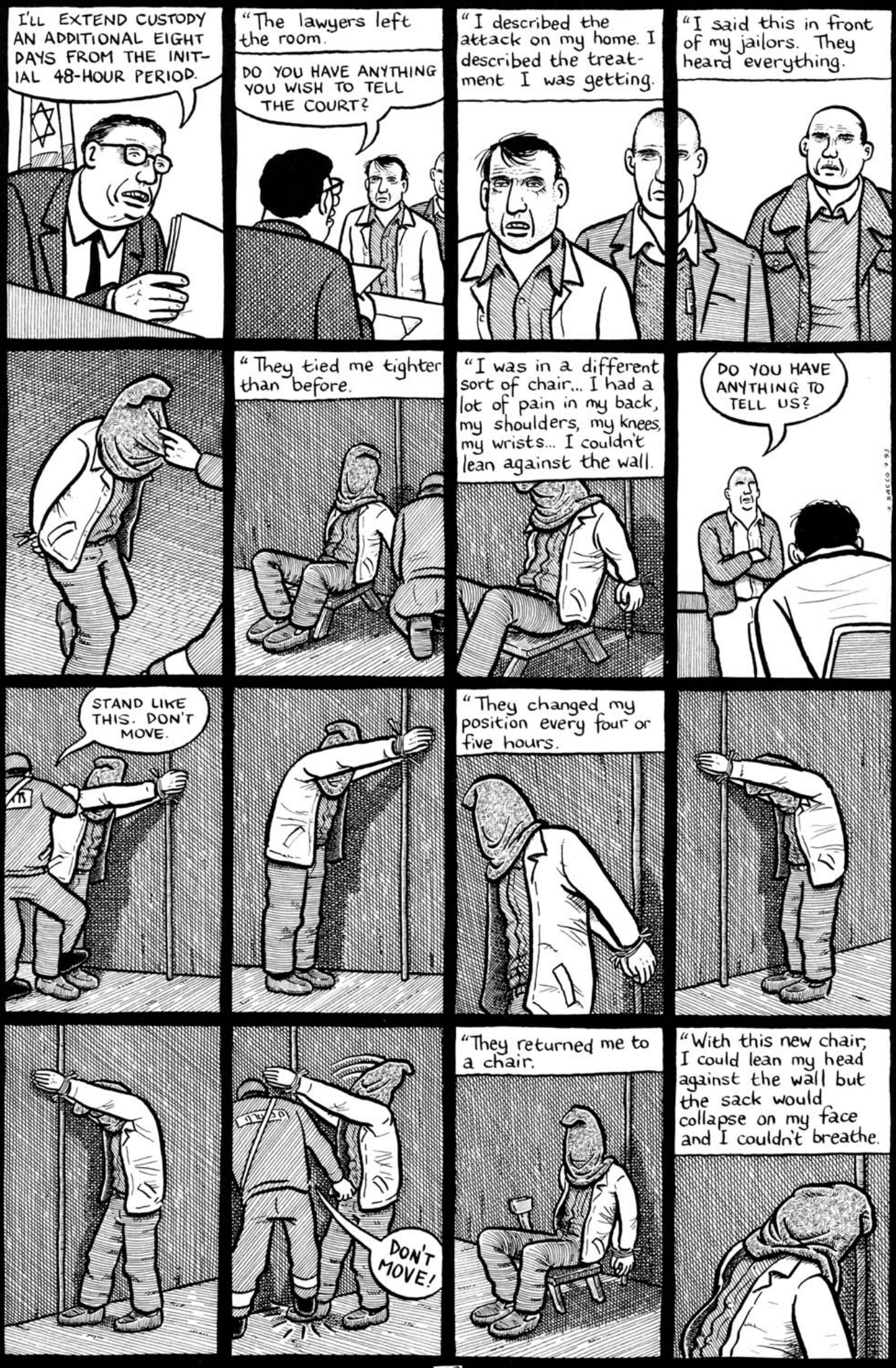
"I got up. I found them inside the house. About 12 to 15 soldiers and policemen and two security men.
"They blindfolded me, tied my hands with plastic, and put me on the kitchen floor.
EVERY DOG HAS ITS DAY.
YOU SHOULDN'T SAY SUCH THINGS, THE WAY YOU'VE ENTERED MY HOME. I HAVE CHILDREN HERE, A WIFE.
YOU BETTER SHUT UP.
"They removed my blindfold and showed me a warrant to enter and search my home.
YOU ARE SUSPECTED OF BELONGING TO AN ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION.
J SACCO 693

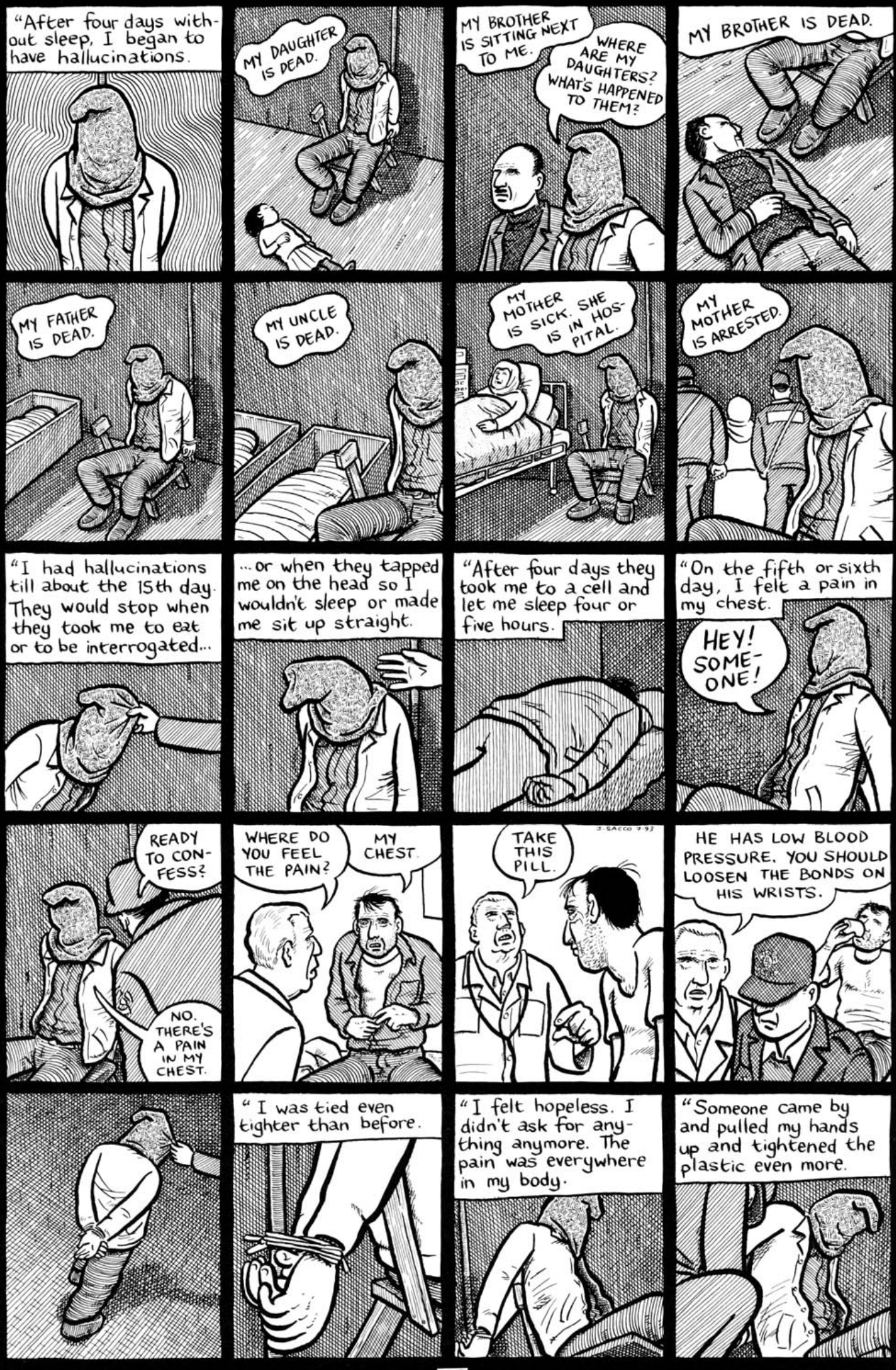
"A man with a camera took two or three photos.
"They blindfolded me again... We were going outside. My wife insisted they take some clothes for me.
FATHER! FATHER!
DON'T BE AFRAID.
"They put me in a car and we drove for five or ten minutes.
"They pulled me into a police station... They untied the blindfold and the plastic around my wrists.
"They took my ID and everything from my pockets and made a list of it.
J. SACCO © 93
"After more photos they took me to a police clinic.
ANY PAINS AT ALL? DISEASES?
NO.
"He didn't do any tests.

"A policeman put a sack on my head and tied my hands behind me... The sack had a dirty smell, like urine.
"He told me to sit in a small chair. He tied my hands very tight, my left hand to an iron bar or pipe and my right hand to the back of the chair.
"After an hour I began to feel a pain in my shoulders.
"After six or seven hours a policeman came for me.
YOU'RE SUSPECTED OF BELONGING TO AN ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION.
J. SACCO 7.93

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. I'M NOT A MEMBER OF ANYTHING. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY.
IF YOU WANT TO CONFESS, OKAY. IF NOT, WE'LL DO SOMETHING ELSE.
"After one or two hours, a policeman came for me.
HERE.
"I was in a cell with a dirty toilet. I had to eat and drink quickly. I had an egg, four pieces of bread, a bit of yogurt, and a piece of tomato. After 10 or 15 minutes, the policeman returned.
"Once I moved to get more comfortable and fell.
HEY.
HEY, SOMEONE.
IDIOT, WHY DON'T YOU SIT STILL?
SIT DOWN.
"I felt I was in a yard with a corrugated zinc roof. It was very cold.
"I could feel other people there. I could hear the police coming and going.

"One time I heard someone talking. I felt once the police come and hit someone.
"Tapes were playing from speakers... very loud... Hebrew songs, English, some Arabic.
"They played three or four cassettes, the same songs, 24 hours a day.
ARE YOU READY TO TALK NOW?
"After about 30 hours from my arrest, the police came for me.
"I felt this time they'll take me to court.
"They took the sack from my head and untied me and left me four or five hours in an office.
"My hands were swollen. The color of my skin was reddish blue.
"I was taken to a court. My lawyer was present but I wasn't allowed to speak to him.
YOUR HONOR, WE BELIEVE THE SUSPECT BELONGS TO AN ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION.
THAT'S NOT TRUE. WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE?
WE FOUND DOCUMENTS IN HIS HOME. HE IS PHONING THE TERRORIST LEADERSHIP ABROAD. WE FOUND THIS LIST OF PHONE NUMBERS.
THIS IS THE NUMBER OF MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, OTHER RELATIVES OF MY WIFE... WHERE I WORK... A HOSPITAL... NUMBERS OF MY RELATIVES...
"The judge could read Arabic. He looked at the list himself.
T. SACCO '91
YOUR HONOR, WE NEED 15 MORE DAYS TO FIND ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE.
YOUR HONOR, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE. MY CLIENT SHOULD BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY.


I'LL EXTEND CUSTODY AN ADDITIONAL EIGHT DAYS FROM THE INITIAL 48-HOUR PERIOD.
"The lawyers left the room.
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU WISH TO TELL THE COURT?
"I described the attack on my home. I described the treatment I was getting.
"I said this in front of my jailors. They heard everything.
"They tied me tighter than before.
"I was in a different sort of chair... I had a lot of pain in my back, my shoulders, my knees, my wrists... I couldn't lean against the wall.
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO TELL US?
J. SACCO '92
STAND LIKE THIS. DON'T MOVE.
"They changed my position every four or five hours.
"They returned me to a chair.
"With this new chair, I could lean my head against the wall but the sack would collapse on my face and I couldn't breathe.
DON'T MOVE!


"After four days without sleep, I began to have hallucinations.
MY DAUGHTER IS DEAD.
MY BROTHER IS SITTING NEXT TO ME.
WHERE ARE MY DAUGHTERS? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THEM?
MY BROTHER IS DEAD.
MY FATHER IS DEAD.
MY UNCLE IS DEAD.
MY MOTHER IS SICK. SHE IS IN HOSPITAL.
MY MOTHER IS ARRESTED.
"I had hallucinations till about the 15th day. They would stop when they took me to eat or to be interrogated...
...or when they tapped me on the head so I wouldn't sleep or made me sit up straight.
"After four days they took me to a cell and let me sleep four or five hours.
"On the fifth or sixth day, I felt a pain in my chest.
HEY! SOMEONE!
READY TO CONFESS?
NO. THERE'S A PAIN IN MY CHEST.
WHERE DO YOU FEEL THE PAIN?
MY CHEST.
J. SACCO 7.93
TAKE THIS PILL.
HE HAS LOW BLOOD PRESSURE. YOU SHOULD LOOSEN THE BONDS ON HIS WRISTS.
"I was tied even tighter than before.
"I felt hopeless. I didn't ask for anything anymore. The pain was everywhere in my body.
"Someone came by and pulled my hands up and tightened the plastic even more.

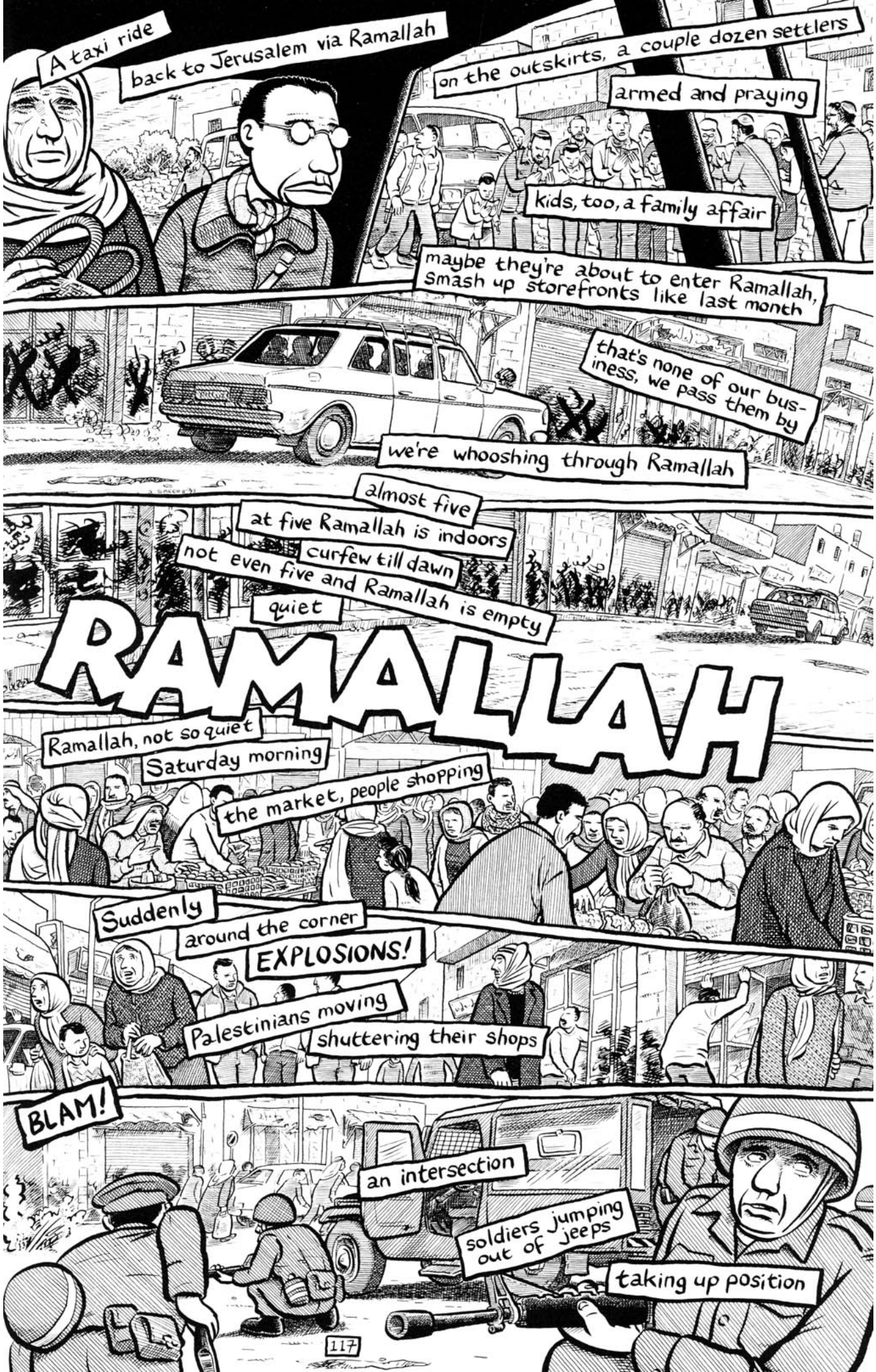
HOW ARE YOU?
I'M FINE.
ANY NEWS? A CONFESSION?
NO.
"Then I stopped feeling pain second-by-second.
"At first it seemed I was being interrogated every seven or eight hours.
TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.
"Later, I think it was every 24 to 30 hours.
I THINK YOU SHOULD CONFESS. WE HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION WE NEED ALREADY. JUST SIGN.
"The interrogations lasted one minute, 10 minutes, 30 minutes, two hours, four hours...
WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PEACE PROCESS?
WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PEACE PROCESS?
€$##!! YOUR ORGANIZATION DOESN'T SUPPORT THE PEACE PROCESS!
I DON'T BELONG TO ANY ORGANIZATION.
YOU ARE LYING!
HERE.
"I wasn't getting enough to eat. They would take me to eat irregularly, once, twice, or three times a day.
MY DAUGHTER IS DEAD.
YOU WANT TO SLEEP NOW?
YES, IF THERE'S A POSSIBILITY.
YOU HAVE TO TALK A LITTLE. YOU HAVE TO COOPERATE WITH US.
AND IF I DON'T?
YOU'LL BE HERE FOR A LONG TIME.
"On the ninth day they let me sleep five or six hours.

"He punched me with his shoulder...
"...then shook me...
"...and threw me back in the chair.
NOW YOU'LL HAVE A HEART ATTACK!
WE HAVEN'T FOUND ANY NEW DOCUMENTS, YOUR HONOR...
...BUT WE'LL HAVE OUR EVIDENCE IF YOU GRANT US ANOTHER 15 DAYS.
YOUR HONOR, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE. THE COURT SHOULD RELEASE MY CLIENT IMMEDIATELY.
"The judge agreed to another seven days.
"The lawyers left the room.
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO THE COURT?
NO.
I DON'T WANT TO PUT YOU IN THIS CELL...YOU'RE A PROFESSIONAL MAN... BUT YOU'RE NOT COOPERATING.
"It was a small dark cell, about 1.2 meters square, full of urine.
"I decided I wasn't going to sit in the urine.
"I was hallucinating I was in a big cell.
"I'd start walking and hit the wall after one step.
"I decided it was better to sit. There was a small dry area on the step.
ANYTHING TO TELL US? IF NOT, YOU'LL HAVE TO STAY IN HERE.
MY DAUGHTER IS DEAD.
"After one or one and a half days, they returned me to the chairs.
"It was very, very cold. On the 12th day, the night of the Feb. 4 storm, they took me to another place.

"It might have been a corridor.
"The wind was blowing hard down the corridor. It felt like the roof was falling.
"The rain was dripping down, the floor was full of water. My socks and shoes were soaked.
"I lost all feeling.
WELL?
"At my third court appearance, the judge decided I should be held an additional four days.
"After four or five hours a policeman asked if I wanted a bath.
IF THERE'S HOT WATER
HERE'S SOME CLOTHES FROM YOUR FAMILY, SOMETHING TO SHAVE WITH.
"It was the first time I'd washed in 15 days.
"I didn't know then that Mustafa Akkawi had just been killed.
"After only two hours in the chair, I was taken to a nice cell to sleep.
"They changed me from one cell to another four or five times, every four or five hours.
"I was allowed to sleep.
"I was in the last cell for two days. It was Saturday, the Sabbath, and they didn't interrogate me.
"On the 19th day I had another court appearance.
YOUR HONOR, WE NEED ANOTHER TEN DAYS TO GATHER EVIDENCE IN THIS CASE.
YOUR HONOR, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE, THERE HAS BEEN NO CONFESSION, MY CLIENT SHOULD BE RELEASED TODAY.
J SACCO '97

YOUR HONOR, WE ARE CLOSE TO GETTING THE INFORMATION WE NEED.
"The judge decided I should be released.
"At three o'clock, I was released."
3 SACCO 7.93

Chapter Five


A taxi ride
back to Jerusalem via Ramallah
on the outskirts, a couple dozen settlers
armed and praying
kids, too, a family affair
maybe they're about to enter Ramallah, smash up storefronts like last month
that's none of our business, we pass them by
we're whooshing through Ramallah
almost five
at five Ramallah is indoors
curfew till dawn
not even five and Ramallah is empty
quiet
RAMALLAH
Ramallah, not so quiet
Saturday morning
the market, people shopping
Suddenly
around the corner
EXPLOSIONS!
Palestinians moving
shuttering their shops
BLAM!
an intersection
soldiers jumping out of jeeps
taking up position

BLAM!
what the—?
excuse me, you speak English?
what's going on?
huh?
I don't catch his answer and he's clearing out
everyone's scattering
I jump into a taxi
a big jam-up
a jeep muscles in, its loudspeaker blaring Arabic
finally we're moving
then, outside Ramallah, a roadblock
but we're lucky
a soldier waves us through
In Jerusalem I'm still so freaked I announce to the Palestinian working the hostel desk that Israeli positions are being attacked in Ramallah...
RAMALLAH? I DON'T THINK SO. EXPLOSIONS?
SIX EXPLOSIONS! I SAW 'EM EXPLODE! SIX! PUFFS OF SMOKE!
I got it way wrong, but those were the first percussion grenades I'd ever heard... the soldiers use them to move people along, to get 'em inside — instant curfew...
I'd hear 'em again in Ramallah
Ramallah, man, that's where the action is
15 minutes from Jerusalem
in 15 minutes I'm there, spending consecutive Saturday mornings waiting for something else to happen
something dicier
A comic needs some bangbang and I'm praying Ramallah will deliver
T SACCO 8 93
118

RAMALLAH
Saturday mornings...
I've told you where you'll find me...
Last weekend in Ramallah?
more teasing!
percussion grenades again!
today?
I've got my fingers crossed...
So far, nothing unusual...
Israelis on patrol...
Ramallah's not their idea of fun...
They move slowly...
twirling every whichway...
pivoting...
pirouetting...
It's the West Bank 'Swan Lake'.
In their shoes I'd do likewise...
You gotta stay on your toes...
A stone outta nowhere can smash in your face...
119

while I'm waiting, I'm briefed on various economic headaches by a falafel vendor...
YOU SEE THE SOLDIERS? YOU SEE THE STORES CLOSED?
THERE'S NO BUSINESS.
THE PEOPLE FROM THE VILLAGES COME IN TO DO THEIR SHOPPING...
THEY SEE ALL THIS, THEY SEE THE SOLDIERS, THEY DON'T COME ANYMORE...
OR THEY SHOP AS FAST AS POSSIBLE AND LEAVE, THEY THINK IT'S BETTER TO SHOP FROM THE ISRAELIS WITH NO TROUBLES...
I USED TO HAVE SEVEN PEOPLE WORKING FOR ME. NOW? ONLY MY FATHER.
The soldiers turn off the main road...
a couple minutes go by...
then
outta nowhere!
a youth and his megaphone!
He's got company!
mostly teenaged boys and girls!
flags are out!
a banner!
they're chanting!
SHIT!
THERE'S GOING TO BE TROUBLE!
My pal splits to close his shop, but I follow the kids... this, I suppose, is my lucky day...
J. SACCO 8 91
120

Others are getting away, pulling the children home...
IMSHI! IMSHI!
and it occurs to me...
this could get serious...
what will happen if something really happens?
the demonstrators don't stop to ponder such questions...
they've got tires burning...
they've got a dumpster overturned...
they're chanting, have I told you that?
I don't want to get too close...
I promised mom I'd be careful...
besides, I'm shaking like a fucking leaf...
I decide to go around the block, approach from the other side...
IT'S GOOD FOR THE COMIC
IT'S GOOD FOR THE COMIC
IT'S GOOD FOR THE COMIC
J. SACCO 8.93
Here we are again...
They're still waving flags...
chanting...
and getting filmed!
who's the dude with the camcorder?
when did he show?
he's standing in the street like it's no one's business...
like it's his intifada...

I'm the one who spent those Saturdays waiting...
move over, buddy! pussies with zoom lenses can film my ass...
the kids, by the way, are still at it...
there's a girl kicking stones down from a side street...
stones are ammo...
bottles, too...
not the sort of arsenal you can look up in 'Jane's'...
but they add underdog color to the heroics in Ramallah...
and my heroics?
I'm afraid you've seen the last of my heroics.
that was them at the top of the page.
Now I'm back to normal...
discreetly positioned in a storefront...
shaking like a leaf...
the noise doesn't help...
all the cars have started up...
everyone's on the go all at once...
all in the same place...
the cab drivers are yelling out their destinations...
EL QUDS! EL QUDS!
what's next?
122
J. SACCO B '91

the jeeps won't make it through this way, the traffic's clogged at the intersection...
the dumpster and burning tires won't stop the jeeps coming from here, but now a bus backs up and blocks the road...
ED ROSE
the kids have moved to the middle, they're milling about, waiting...
Automatic fire!
Soldiers!
the kids are running
hurling stones over the bus
Rat-tat-tat-tat
now they're running back
away
Jesus, that was quick
123

from the other side...
a jeep's trying to get through...
I wouldn't advise it!
here come the rocks!
the jeep backs up!
then comes back!
pushes through!
the Israelis have the road again!
Oops!
I spoke too soon!
this kid's got other ideas...
She'll never say die...
124
J. SACCO '91

Here comes a couple soldiers...
They're checking the shops that are still open, one by one...
They're satisfied, they're heading back...
Up the road, soldiers are questioning a kid with a bicycle...
They've got another kid, this one's going in the truck...
EL QUDS! EL QUDS!
El Quds: Jerusalem!
Okay, I've had it...
I want out before the soldiers check this side of the street...
Like a leaf, I tell you, the whole fucking time...
In 15 minutes we'll be in Jerusalem...
They don't stop us at the roadblock...
Okay, I'm sated, that's enough of that...
I've had my fun...
I've got some burning tires and automatic fire to add to my collection...
...to my comics magnum opus...
that's enough of that...
125

CHICAGO
I JUST MOVED BACK TO PALESTINE. I WAS ELEVEN YEARS IN AMERICA.
I WAS LIVING IN THE WINDY CITY, CHICAGO.
I MOVED BACK BECAUSE THE STATES IS NO PLACE TO RAISE CHILDREN.
I HAVE FIVE.
IT'S TOO HARD TO CONTROL YOUR KIDS THERE. THEY PICK UP SO MUCH.
WELL, THEY'RE NOT VERY HAPPY HERE.
THEY PROBABLY MISS THE TELEVISION, AND HERE THE ELECTRICITY GOES OFF FOR A WEEK AT A TIME.
AND THEY'RE AFRAID OF THE SOLDIERS.
I DON'T LIKE TO TAKE THEM TO RAMALLAH. YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN THERE. I ONLY TAKE THEM FOR AN EMERGENCY, LIKE A DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT.
I'D NEVER TAKE THEM TO NABLUS...
HAVE YOU SEEN OUR LIFE HERE? HAVE YOU BEEN TO THE CAMPS? WITH THE WATER DRIPPING INSIDE IN WINTER?
THE PEOPLE IN AMERICA MIGHT KNOW ABOUT THE PROBLEMS HERE, BUT THEY'RE ON THE SIDE OF THOSE WITH THE MONEY, AND THE PALESTINIANS HAVE NO MONEY.
WHY DID THE U.S. REACT SO STRONGLY TO KUWAIT?
AND IF YOU'RE ONE OF THE ONE-IN-TEN OR ONE-IN-A-HUNDRED JOURNALISTS WHO WANTS TO TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT PALESTINE, IT WON'T GET PRINTED BECAUSE THE JEWS OWN THE NEWSPAPERS, THEY OWN EVERYTHING IN AMERICA.
THE MANAGERS AND BOSSES IN AMERICA ARE ALL JEWISH.

No market in Hebron today, the center of Hebron is closed...
GETTING the STORY
The women don't like it one bit, they need to get to the other side...
This one in particular, she's insistent...
She must get across, understand?
No No No!
The soldier won't let her through...
CAN I GET THROUGH?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
AH... THE TOMB OF THE PATRIARCHS...
IF YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH, YOU CAN GO THROUGH.
which goes to show you the pull of a true-blue American accent sometimes...
I press my luck...
BUT THESE PEOPLE CAN'T GET THROUGH? I'D FEEL STRANGE GETTING THROUGH IF THEY CAN'T...
DO WHAT YOU WANT!
Now he's suspicious...
SO, DO YOU KNOW WHY THE ROAD IS CLOSED?
NO!
...and he's gone monosyllabic...
yep, our special relationship is definitely over...
Meanwhile, the other soldier's had enough badgering...
He's got a short fuse!
He's about to blow his top!
His M-16's in the air! He's waving it around!
and you don't need to know Hebrew, Arabic, or Swahili to catch his drift...
127
J. SACCO 9-93

it's like, you see this?
this!
this is why you can't get through!
I know when to beat a retreat... I walk back up the road. There's a square and no one's allowed through that way either... It's a big square, a big job for just two soldiers... Every time their backs are turned, someone else is trying to shuffle through... They chase people off, yelling...
IMSHI! IMSHI!
Hey, kid!
You!
Yeah, you!
Stand by the wall!
Get your ID out!
I've got nowhere else to go today, I'm hanging out, watching...
YOU TAKE A PICTURE? THE SOLDIERS?
YEAH. WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE?
J SACCO 9 93
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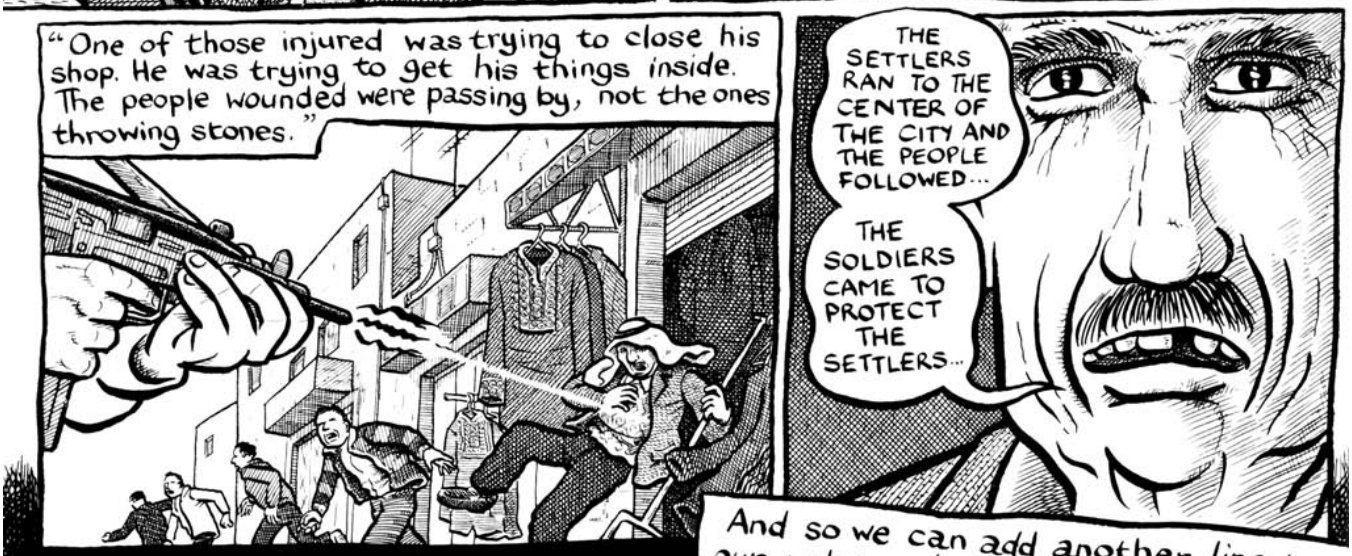
I get an outline, half in English, half in pantomime: Settlers attacked yesterday, four people shot...
one here
another here
one here
THEY COME WITH CHILDREN, WITH WOMEN! FIVE WOMEN! TEN!
These two, in fact, they're on their way to Jerusalem to see their buddy in hospital, the one who got it in the head...
where's a taxi?
meanwhile, I'm a journalist, a professional, I need more details... Okay, this fellow knows someone who's got better English, this way please...
I'm introduced to Bassem, he's closing up his shop for now, he'll take me to his cousin. I tell him I want the facts, the story on yesterday's attack...
A customer shrugs...
SOMETHING ALWAYS HAPPENS. YESTERDAY IN HEBRON, TODAY SOMEWHERE ELSE, BUT SOMETHING ALWAYS HAPPENS...
Bassem leads me up a few streets... in a small workshop he introduces me to Shafeek, a student at Hebron's university...
okay, everyone's nice 'n' cozy? now what about yesterday's attack?
I CAME TO MY HOME. I SAW TWO CARS CARRYING THE INJURED. THE SOLDIERS CAME TWO OR THREE HOURS LATER AND IMPOSED A CURFEW...
The place fills up with young men, kids from the neighborhood, piles of them... I tell you, I could pack bleachers at some of my interviews, clean up on a tea concession...
That's it? But this is second-hand info... he heard shots but didn't see any shooting...
129

Obviously I'm getting nowhere on this attack story... the talk shifts to the occupation in general, the prospect for peace...
I SUPPORT PEACE, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT WILL HAPPEN... WHEN ISRAEL TALKS OF PEACE IT IS BECAUSE OF AMERICAN PRESSURE... AND THE AL-HUSSEIN MISSILES FROM IRAQ.
YOU MEAN DURING THE GULF WAR? THE SCUDS?
NO! THEY WERE NOT SCUDS! THEY WERE AL-HUSSEIN MISSILES, MADE IN IRAQ!!
okay okay, made in Iraq!
WE WERE HAPPY SEEING THE ISRAELIS DESTROYED BY THE MISSILES... WE WERE ON THE ROOF SAYING, "ALLAH AQBAR!" MY NEIGHBOR HERE WAS BEATEN FOR CHEERING THE MISSILES! THEY BEAT HIS BROTHERS, TOO, EVEN THE ONES NOT ON THE ROOF...
WE DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYONE KILLED, BUT THE JEWS KILL US AND THE MISSILES KILL THE JEWS, AND THAT MAKES US HAPPY!
Yikes! These guys could use the services of a good public relations officer!
I mean, it's the turn-the-other-cheek stuff that gets out the hankies at the knitting circle...
But I've heard this business before... in Beit Sahour an old woman told me she'd "enjoyed" the missile attacks, she'd welcomed Saddam Hussein's promise to liberate Palestine. "When you are drowning," she said, "you grab anything to stay afloat, even the tiniest piece of wood."
And as for Shafeek...
I AM COMPLETELY SYMPATHETIC WITH IRAQ. SADDAM HUSSEIN IS OUR FINAL HOPE. NOW HE IS TRYING TO REBUILD HIS POWER, HIS ARMY.
Time to shift gears again... I want to know about Hebron... Thousands of Jews have settled nearby since the '70s, some forcibly in the heart of town... Are there any relations between settlers and Palestinians in Hebron?
THERE ARE NO RELATIONS, ONLY HOSTILE RELATIONS! BOTH SIDES HATE EACH OTHER!
That answers that question! And I suppose it'd be too much to expect any Palestinian lipstick on settlers' collars in this burg! Or vice versa! This is an eye-for-an-eye town...
March '79: Two Palestinian teenagers killed.
Jan. '80: Soldier-yeshiva student shot dead.
May '80: Six yeshiva students killed after prayers.
Nov. '81: After one Jew is stabbed, three Palestinian children are shot.
March '82: Two Palestinians killed, seven wounded.
Oct. '82: Two Palestinian children wounded in grenade attack.
July '83: Yeshiva student killed; machine-gun and grenade attack on Islamic College kills three Palestinian students.
You get the picture, the list goes on... but let's skip it for now, lunch is being served!
130

We move to another room, and here's the menu: pita bread, broth, tomatoes, sardines, fried eggs, a leafy matter in a yogurt concoction...
DO YOU HAVE ANY ISRAELI FRIENDS?
NO. I DEAL WITH SOME ISRAELIS IN BUSINESS MATTERS. I BUY SOME MATERIALS FROM THEM FOR MANUFACTURE IN PALESTINIAN FACTORIES.
HOW DO YOU GET ALONG WITH THEM?
WE TREAT EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT.
Finally! And I've fished long enough for that ambivalent scrap!
LOOK, I CAN'T IMAGINE JEWS AND ARABS LIVING TOGETHER...
BUT THE KORAN TEACHES US TO RESPECT ALL PEOPLE, JEWS AND CHRISTIANS...
THERE IS BUT ONE GOD...
You said it! "We are the world, la la la la la" ♫ ♪
Lunch is over and a few neighborhood men drop by to check me out...
I start to ask questions but I'm cut off right away...
EXCUSE US IF WE DON'T TALK FREELY, BUT SOMETIMES THE ISRAELIS SEND IN PEOPLE POSING AS FOREIGNERS OR JOURNALISTS, AND LATER THERE ARE ARRESTS.
WELL, I WILL TALK FREELY!
Just then, a knock at the door...
Someone enters, has an announcement...
VERY GOOD NEWS...
OUR COUSIN WILL BE ALL RIGHT...
THE BULLET DID NOT ENTER HIS SKULL...
BUT THE ONE WHO WAS SHOT IN THE ASS MAY HAVE COMPLICATIONS...
Ah, we're back on yesterday's attack...
...and it turns out we've got an eye witness here. He's willing to talk... I get my story after all...
THEY CAME ON FOOT, THROUGH THE FIELDS...
J. SACCO 97



And so we can add another line to our unhappy list... we've had some more tit-for-tat in Hebron, and I expect it'll be tat again before too long...

Anyway, the next morning I pick up the Israeli English-language daily and get a different slant on the settlers' armed family outing in the Palestinian neighborhood...

THE JERUSALEM POST 60 1932-1992

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... in aims for

... major factor in de... for elections.

... housewives ... government legalized all private ... sactions, ...

Seven hurt in Hebron shooting incident

Three Kiryat Arba residents were lightly injured and four Hebron Arabs critically, seriously, and lightly hurt in an incident yesterday afternoon.

A group of Jewish families, members of the Kach-affiliated Committee for Safety on the Roads, were patrolling in the Harat a-Sheikh section of Hebron, when they were attacked by several hundred Arabs. They said they were pelted with rocks and bottles from rooftops and alleys.

Two children and a woman were injured.

Two escape, the settlers fired in the air, and when that had no effect, they said they fired at the legs of the rock-throwers.

Last night, four wounded Arabs were brought to Mokassad Hospital in East Jerusalem. One, the hospital reported, was in critical condition with a bullet wound in the abdomen. Two others were seriously wounded in the head and chest, and a third lightly wounded in the leg.

The IDF relayed a report on the incident to the Hebron police, who have opened an investigation.

The Committee for Safety on the Roads said it would continue to patrol Arab neighborhoods which Jews have previously preferred not to enter.

On Friday, some 150 settlers from Kiryat Arba and Hebron had blocked the road to Kiryat Arba where it passes through the Tark section of Hebron. They charged that cars and buses were constantly being stoned there.

After two hours, the IDF convinced the settlers to open the road.

(Itim)

UI... fr... to ...

An ... spotted ... Friday ... Th... ject... first ... sou...

Moslem fundamentalists

WOMEN
I have an appointment, eleven o'clock, I'm here to get the lowdown on the Palestinian women's movement... Sorry, I'm told, I'm in for a wait... Meanwhile, there's a loud discussion in the next room...
ten minutes it lasts...
then a teenaged girl and her mother make their exit...
My turn, I'm ushered in...
I meet a couple of executive members of the Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees...
They fill me in...
The girl who left, she's 15 years old, her second marriage is on the rocks ...She's got a baby from her first marriage, she was 14 back then and knew nothing about the responsibility of building a family... At the first sign of problems: divorce!
Two months later she married again, Husband Number Two beat her, he wanted her to go buy tea, there were soldiers outside and she refused, he threw hot water on her...
She went back to her mother's in Nablus, left her gold jewelry and furniture at Hubby Number Two's in Hebron...
He wants her to waive her right to the stuff, to relinquish any financial claims... She's not sure of the legalities, she came for advice...
J SACCO 10·93

WE ADVISED HER NOT TO SIGN ANYTHING... AND HE HAS TO PAY ALIMONY. IT'S IN THE WEDDING CONTRACT...
The Federation, she tells me, consults with a lawyer who will follow up in court, if necessary...
ALSO WE'RE SENDING HER TO A LITERACY CENTER IN NABLUS, WE'LL HELP HER FIND VOCATIONAL TRAINING...
SHE HAS TO LEARN NOT TO BE DEPENDENT ON A MAN...
Maybe the girl will get it together, learn self-sufficiency, become a minor success story in the overall women's struggle here...
or maybe not...
WE ARE AN ARABIC, MIDDLE-EASTERN SOCIETY... THERE ARE TRADITIONAL ROLES—AN OLD PICTURE OF WOMEN—THAT WE WANT TO CHANGE, BUT WE FACE OBSTACLES FROM MEN AND FROM WOMEN... SOME WOMEN REFUSE CHANGE...
Outreach programs endeavor to concern women with their own economic and legal status, but according to Muna, who works with the General Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, "The elite, the educated, who live in the cities, are exposed to the women's movement...
"But in the villages it's different. They still think they're subordinate to men. They'll think I'm talking a foreign language if I tell them they're equal to men... Sometimes it seems like we're talking to ourselves..."
Rita, who works for a human rights organization, is a little more optimistic. She says slowly but surely women are taking on decision-making roles in their families, and if they work, they're more likely to keep their wages...
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She says Islam —and the vast majority of Palestinian women are Muslim— grants women property rights, and Islamic law can be interpreted to the advantage of women... Marriage contracts, for example, are a feature of Islam...
"A woman getting married can put conditions on her husband, and if these are not met, she can ask for a divorce... A woman might stipulate that if her husband takes a second wife, that is grounds for a divorce, or if he prevents her from working or leaves to go abroad..."
Polygamy, she says, can be curtailed by a strict reading of Islamic law, which says a man must treat each wife equally — all but an impossibility, she argues...
So, in theory, Islam offers avenues by which women can press for their rights...
BUT IN PRACTICE, THIS IS A GREAT DIFFICULTY...
And we're back to square one, raising the political self-awareness of women in the context of certain cultural and religious realities...
Rita is philosophical about the slow road to societal change...
LOOK, I'M A CATHOLIC... THREE YEARS AGO I WAS ALL FOR SECULAR LAWS TO PROTECT WOMEN, I WOULDN'T GIVE THE IDEA UP. BUT WE CAN'T ACHIEVE THAT NOW...
Muna, a non-practising Muslim, is more skeptical about using Islamic law to advance women's rights... she sees some irreconcilable differences...
WE HAVE A BIG PROBLEM WITH BATTERED WOMEN... THE KORAN PERMITS A MAN TO BEAT A WOMAN ...WOMEN HERE ARE TAUGHT THEY CAN BE SLAPPED, EVEN THE CHRISTIANS... IT'S PART OF THE ARAB CULTURE... WOMEN HERE DON'T COMPLAIN, THEY DON'T CALL THEMSELVES BATTERED... AND IT'S NOT JUST A CHARACTERISTIC OF THE POOR...
EDUCATE MEN? WE'RE NOT DOING ENOUGH TO EDUCATE WOMEN!
J. SACCO 10-93

"We talk about homes for battered women, but you can't just take a woman out of her house here... This is not a rebellion culture... Men, even liberal ones, would react against this... Trying to reconcile the couple, that's the man's view..."
Feminists need to discuss this and other issues, but the different women's groups correspond to one PLO faction or another and are divided along political lines...
"We clash on the national agenda. We're not working on the social agenda together. We're not utilizing common ground. We're not exploiting the PLO constitution which granted women equality with men... We don't have a clear women's agenda..."
All the feminists I met talked of the need to push their views while also resisting the occupation...
And while the revolutionary atmosphere of the intifada fosters discussion of social change, no one's under any illusions about where the women's movement stands in the scheme of things...
Feminists here talk about the lesson of the Algerian revolution, where women fought alongside men but were pushed back into traditional roles once the French were defeated...
IF WE GET A STATE, DO WE RETREAT BACK TO THE WAY THINGS WERE, OR DO WE CHANGE THINGS? WILL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BE CONSIDERED PRIORITY AND WOMEN'S ISSUES LEFT BEHIND?
WE'RE ATTACHED TO THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT...
ANY REGRESSION IN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND WE'RE THE HARDEST HIT PEOPLE...
THE INTIFADA ISN'T OVER... BUT PEOPLE FIGURE, "IF WE LOSE PALESTINE, WHY WORRY ABOUT WOMEN?"
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J. SACCO 10-93

Okay, it's all well and good to chat with feminists, we've all got our university degrees, we're all on the same wave-length, sometimes we could finish each other's sentences...
HIJAB
It's the women in the street I don't get, I mean the Muslim women wearing the hijab, the "veil" hiding their hair, and the outfits that cover everything but face and hands...
Let's face it, I'm from the West, I've seen plenty of leg, orange hair, too, and other fashion statements... But this getup, it's nondescript, I blank out most all the women who wear it, they're just shapes to me, ciphers, like pigeons moving along the sidewalk...
So imagine my surprise — I'm in a taxi on the way to Nablus — when one of these pigeons turns to me and...
YOU ARE FROM WHERE? YOU HAVE BEEN TO PALESTINE BEFORE? TO NABLUS? NABLUS IS THE BIGGEST TOWN ON THE WEST BANK BLAH BLAH BLAH...
Just like that! I'm not kidding! In perfect English! The King's!
I sat stunned, shocked, I mean I didn't know such life-forms could initiate contact...
You could say the hijab was more my problem than hers... but let's not leave it at that, the hijab is a focal point of some debate here, and it's an issue that throws the interrelationship of the intifada, Islam, and women into some relief...
J. SACCO 1993
BEDFORD
137

The way Muna tells the story, at the beginning of the uprising the Unified Leadership—which includes the main PLO factions—called for traditional dress as a way of emphasizing Palestinian identity...
Hamas, the extremist Islamic group which rivals the secular PLO, then called for the compulsory wearing of the hijab. She says Hamas followers began threatening women and sometimes beating them for going outside without a head covering...
In Dec. 1990 a first-of-its-kind conference on the social problems of Palestinian women declared women should have the right to choose whether to wear the hijab or not... She says the Unified Leadership concurred with a leaflet and messages saying anyone who attacked a woman for not wearing the hijab was a traitor...
In any case, in the week I spent in the Gaza Strip, where Hamas is particularly strong, not once did I see a woman past her mid-teens outdoors without her head covered...
What am I supposed to think? That Hamas makes them do it?
I meet with a few Gazan women to get some handle on the subject... The first two, ages 19 and 20, live just outside Jabalia refugee camp and say they've worn the hijab since their early teens...
WE BELIEVE WE HAVE TO. AFTER SIX YEARS OF WEARING IT, IT SEEMS LIKE A HABIT TO ME...
IT IS WRITTEN IN THE KORAN.
Well, I should add some Muslim feminists dispute the interpretation of the relevant passages...
J. SACCO 11-93
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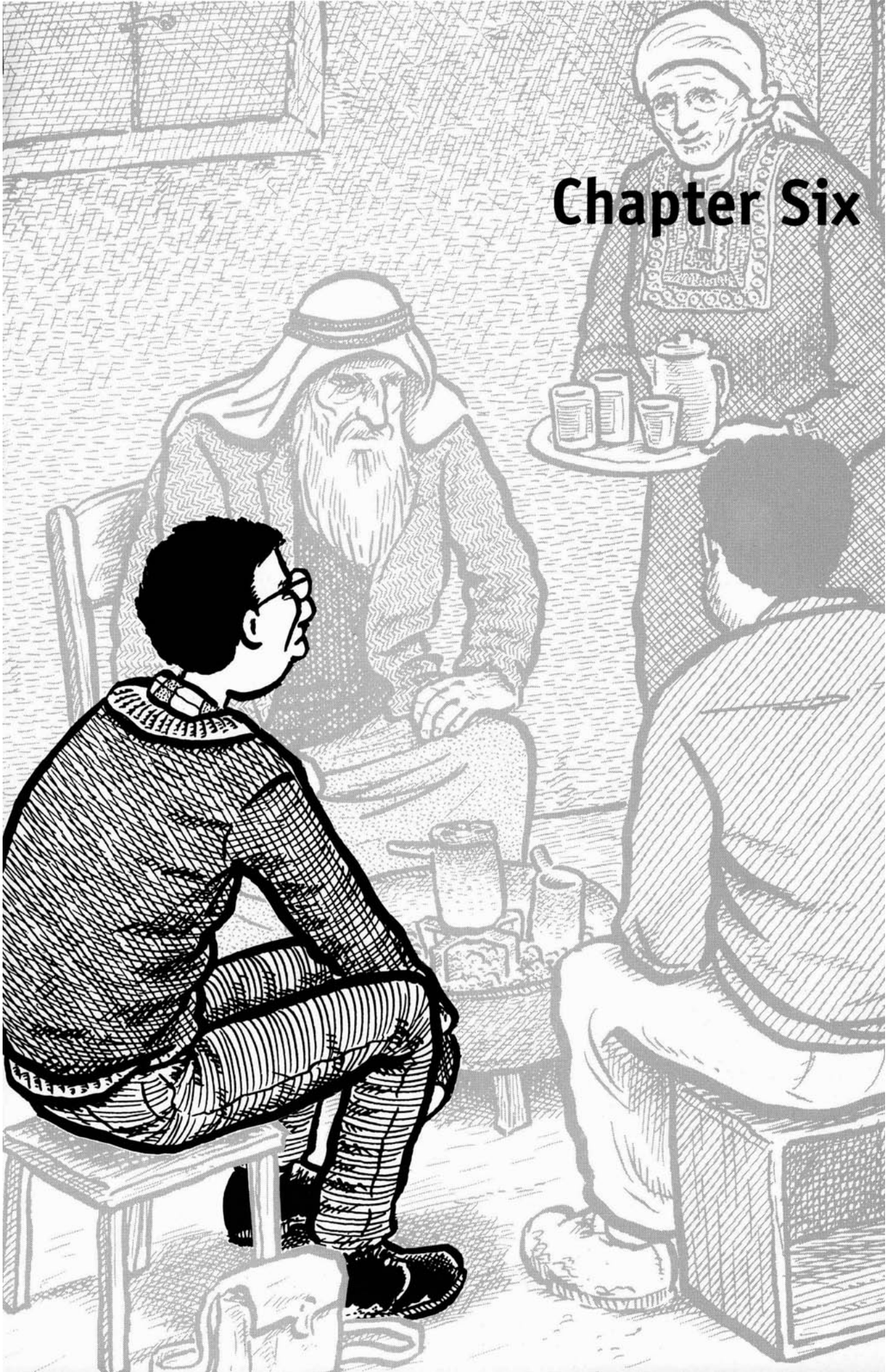
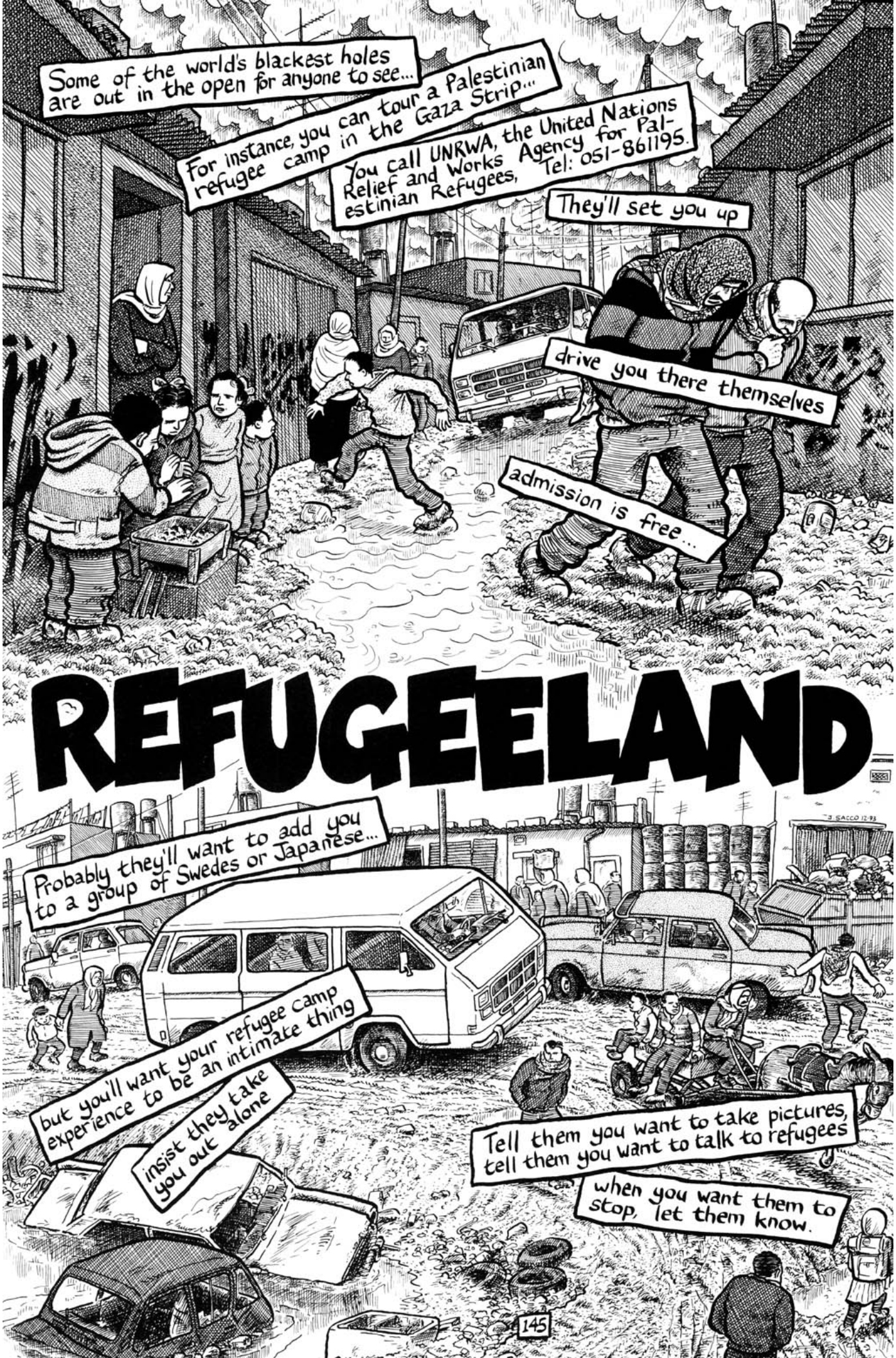
But what about Hamas?
I BEGAN WEARING IT BEFORE THE RISE OF HAMAS. I DON'T KNOW ANYONE WHO WAS PRESSURED BY HAMAS, BUT SOME WERE FORCED BY THEIR PARENTS...
SOME OF MY FRIENDS DON'T WEAR IT. I'VE TALKED IT OVER WITH THREE FRIENDS WHO DIDN'T, AND THEY WEAR IT NOW...
Both say, though, women should have the right to choose not to wear the hijab...
In Jabalia a group of women tell me they know of no one forced by Hamas to wear the hijab...
THE KORAN TELLS US TO WEAR IT. I WAS 16 BEFORE I STARTED TO WEAR IT.
IT WAS THE TEACHING AT THE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY, WHERE IT IS REQUIRED AS A UNIFORM, THAT CONVINCED ME OF THE NECESSITY...
THE REASONS WOMEN MAY WEAR IT ARE RELIGIOUS, OR POLITICAL, OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF SOCIETAL PRESSURE. BUT I SEE WEARING IT AS A POSITIVE THING, IT'S A WAY OF OBTAINING RESPECT...
One of the women seems put off by my questioning, like who am I to strut in with my Western, patronizing air?
OF COURSE THERE IS MALE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN, AND THIS HAS TO CHANGE...
BUT THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS CAN COEXIST WITH A STRICT UNDERSTANDING OF THE KORAN...
In an office in Gaza Town, a woman in her early 20s says she's worn the hijab since she was 16...
I WEAR IT FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS... ALSO, IT HELPS ME AVOID PROBLEMS... ALL MY FAMILY IS STRICTLY RELIGIOUS...
I DON'T WANT A MISUNDERSTANDING WITH MY FAMILY, ESPECIALLY MY FATHER...
J. SACCO 11-93

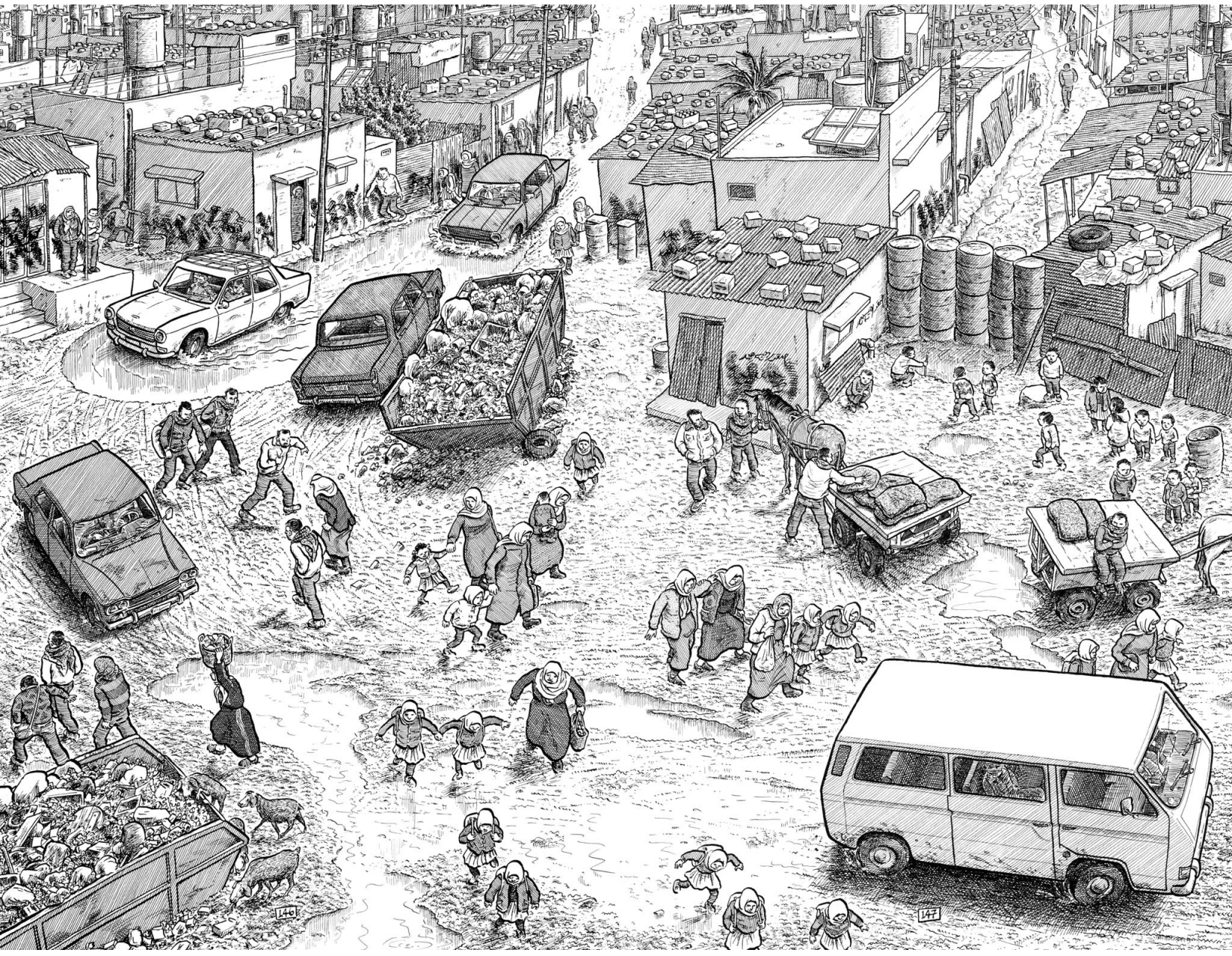
And Hamas?
HAMAS CONSIDERS THE INTIFADA A WAY OF SPREADING ITS AGENDA. THEY WANT TO FORCE WOMEN TO WEAR THE HIJAB...
"One day I was doing some shopping on Omar el-Mukhtar Street. I saw a lady physician driving her car, right by the hospital. She wasn't wearing the hijab. Three or four youths began stoning her car, injuring her, she was bleeding..."
COVER YOUR HEAD!
COVER YOUR HEAD!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? SHE IS A CHRISTIAN!
At the beginning of the intifada, Palestinian Christians in Gaza wore the hijab to be on the safe side, she says, "but not so much now." She says such violent activities against women have decreased...
TOP-COLA
In the same office, two attractive young women, decked out with cosmetics, seem to counter everything I've seen in Gaza thusfar...
I SEE YOU'RE NOT WEARING THE HIJAB.
WE WEAR IT OUTSIDE.
So, do they feel obliged to wear it?
No no no! I've got it all wrong! On the contrary-
I WANT TO BELIEVE STRONGLY ENOUGH TO WEAR THE HIJAB ALWAYS...
Did I catch that right?
NOT JUST IN THE STREETS... I WANT TO REALLY BELIEVE IN WEARING IT...
I tell you, that throws me for a loop, and I see the gulf between us...
I realize then I've forgotten what it's like to have faith...
I mean, I've forgotten what it's like to want to have faith...
J. SACCO 11-93

STILL ONE OF THE BOYS
One morning with a blind man in Jabalia camp...
I APOLOGIZE, THERE IS NO TEA THIS MORNING...
I HAVEN'T EVEN HAD BREAKFAST...
ONE OF MY WIVES IS SICK, THE OTHER IS VISITING HER PARENTS...
I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO GO OUT AND GET ANOTHER WIFE.
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA
IF YOU MARRY HER WITHIN THE HOUR, MAYBE YOU CAN GET LUNCH.
J. SACCO 11/93
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

Chapter Six




Some of the world's blackest holes are out in the open for anyone to see...
For instance, you can tour a Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip...
You call UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, Tel: 051-861195.
They'll set you up
drive you there themselves
admission is free...
REFUGEELAND
J. SACCO 12-93
Probably they'll want to add you to a group of Swedes or Japanese...
but you'll want your refugee camp experience to be an intimate thing
insist they take you out alone
Tell them you want to take pictures, tell them you want to talk to refugees
when you want them to stop, let them know.



J. SACCO '92

...and if you don't ask them to stop, they'll stop anyway beneath the orange and white tower that rises from the Israeli Defense Forces base and watches unblinkingly over Jabalia refugee camp...
...'cause they'll have something else to show you, they'll want to conclude your UNRWA outing on an upbeat note, it's not all open sewage and omniscient IDF towers in Jabalia, you know...
...they'll take you into the rehab center where deaf kids are taught to speak... the class will stop for you, and a teacher will trot out the star pupil... he's deaf like a nail but he can read lips...
FUQ.
FUQ!
He'll write it on the board, too...
See!
Three cheers!
Progress is being made!
فوق
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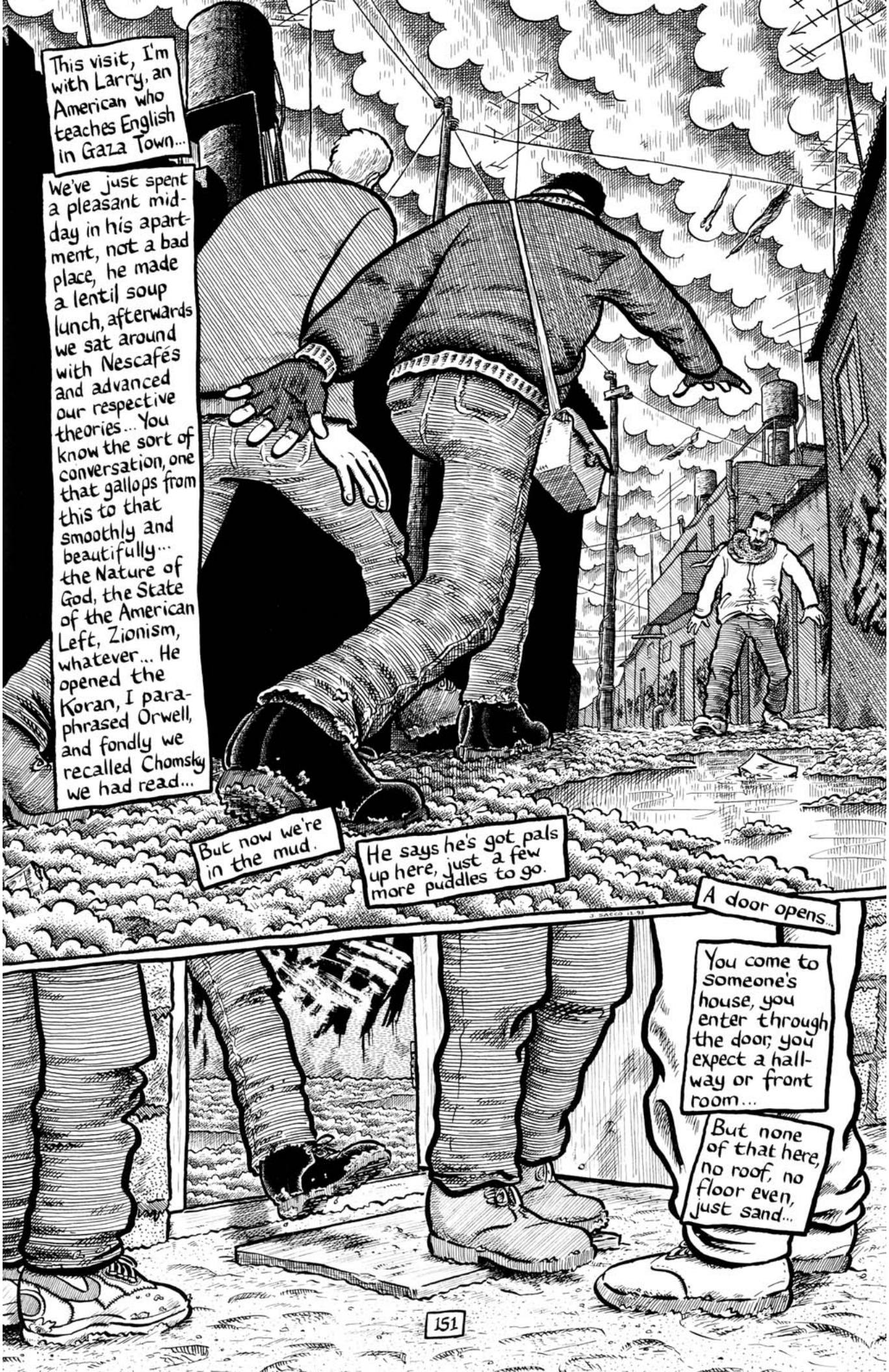
ROOMS

That's the Mediterranean rising up
The towers, that's the prison for Palestinians, Ansar II
J. SACCO 11.93
Nuseirat refugee camp, Block 2
It's been raining
Once, when I was shuddering at conditions in Balata camp on the West Bank, someone told me, "If you think this is bad, you should see Gaza."
So I saw Gaza, sort of... I did the UNRWA tour, in and out in two hours.
And I did Gaza by numbers... 140 square miles (I read), three-quarters of a million Palestinians, one of the most densely populated areas on earth ... 70 percent registered as refugees... almost 300,000 in eight UNRWA-administered camps (like this one)... per capita income of $1,700, one-ninth of that in Israel... 40 percent unemployment... and so on, I sloshed through the dozens of this and millions of that...


This visit, I'm with Larry, an American who teaches English in Gaza Town...
We've just spent a pleasant midday in his apartment, not a bad place, he made a lentil soup lunch, afterwards we sat around with Nescafés and advanced our respective theories... You know the sort of conversation, one that gallops from this to that smoothly and beautifully... the Nature of God, the State of the American Left, Zionism, whatever... He opened the Koran, I paraphrased Orwell, and fondly we recalled Chomsky we had read...
But now we're in the mud.
He says he's got pals up here, just a few more puddles to go.
A door opens...
You come to someone's house, you enter through the door, you expect a hallway or front room...
But none of that here, no roof, no floor even, just sand...
J. SACCO 11-93

Introductions, and we're sitting in a room off to the side...
It's cold, there's six or seven men sitting around, the tea comes...
The cold, the men, the tea...
That's the Essence of Palestinian Room... this could be almost every room I've ever sat in in Palestine...
They say the couch is new, though, arrived today...
Someone wants to know what I'm here for...
I say I've come to see their lives under occupation...
HE SAYS YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE YESTERDAY WHEN THE SOLDIERS WENT INTO THE SCHOOL AND CLOSED IT DOWN.
These rooms...
not even the talk changes...
The soldiers closed down the school, the soldiers imposed a curfew...
The soldiers clubbed me on the head, the soldiers took me away...
Over and over, the same stories, maybe with some bruises shuffled.
Who are these people, anyway?
I've been introduced but I can't remember any names.
And where am I?
Nuseirat camp.
Nooz-er-ut?
Noiz-er-ut?
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Someone's showing me his permit to work in Israel, he's doctored it, see? He's extended his permit by scratching off a zero. "He does it because he must work," someone explains, "The Israelis take so long to renew his papers"... Nuseirat camp, the Gaza Strip, unemployment 40 percent, a job in Israel is a prized thing even though

the average daily wage for Palestinian workers is just $20, even if transportation to work costs more than half that, even if it means four hours travelling time to and from Tel Aviv every day... This guy's a lucky one, too, he works, he teaches locally, over in Khan Younis... What's his name again? Masud? Masud. Masud who teaches

in Khan Younis... He tells me why the school, two schools, were closed in Nuseirat yesterday. What happened? "The soldiers come," he says, "two Thursdays in a row, they park near the school. It's a provocation and someone throws a stone. The soldiers go in with tear gas, shooting rubber and live bullets." Once, Masud says, a student

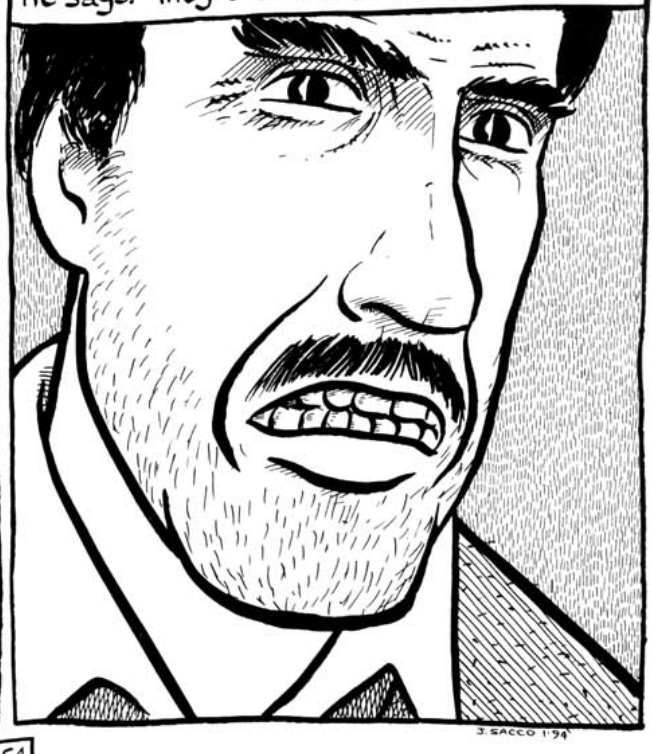
where he teaches, an eight year old, was killed by a rubber bullet, it entered the boy's head... The Gaza Strip, lots of kids get shot here... in '89, for example, of 3,779 live-round casualties, 1,506 were children under 15, 33 were five years old or younger... Masud, though, doesn't seem too bitter. So, does he have hopes for

peace with Israel? "No," he says, "I have no hope. Things won't change." But that seems almost beside the point to Masud. "We Arabs have tried nationalism," he says, "but what the people must do is return to their Muslim roots. Fundamentalism is on the rise and that's a good thing. Now it is the turn of Islam." The turn of Islam?

Fundamentalism? That's the cue for all true white men to form a perimeter around the women and children!... But Masud's brand of fundamentalism doesn't sound like the militancy of Hamas, the resistance movement which emphasizes a forceful liberation of Palestine as it moves to Islamize Palestinian society. And someone—

his name is Ibrahim, and this is his room, I take it, his couch—says he believes in the armed struggle all right. "The Israelis only understand force," he says. How? What force? "There are ways. So far it's been stones, but there are guns." Yes yes, I've heard this before, Palestinians stewing in rooms like this one, raising a finger in

warning and the specter of shooting Israelis... The intifada thusfar, they say, has been an exercise in restraint... But the Israelis are exponentially more powerful than the Palestinians, does Ibrahim expect a hand (or a tank corps) from the Arab states? "The other Arabs are worthless," he says. "They're talk talk talk. Where was



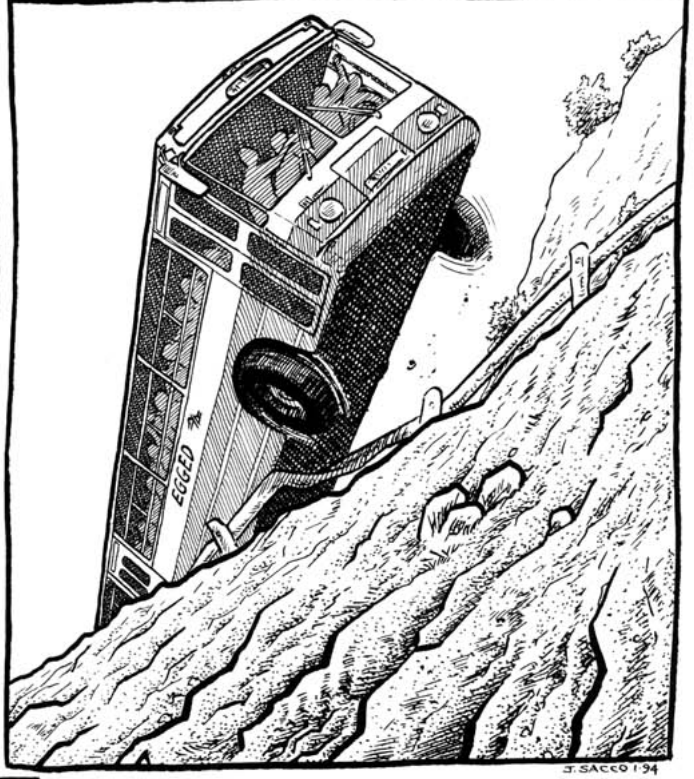
J. SACCO 1-94

Qaddafi during the Gulf War? Only Saddam Hussein attacked Israel. He kept his word. Was he a man or was he a man?" Ibrahim's on a roll now about Palestinian military prowess, his commando raid Top Ten... Did I hear about the shebab who seized the bus and made a seven-kilometer run attacking Israeli positions until a

helicopter got them? And what about Leila Khaled?! A PFLP guerilla, she helped hijack those airliners to Jordan, the ones blown up after being emptied of passengers and crew... "I don't agree with those tactics," says a man with a beard. "They didn't get us anywhere." And Masud, the fundamentalist, agrees... Probably they've talked this

through a hundred times before in Nuseirat, in other camps, in villages and towns, in rooms just like this one, with the tea coming and coming, year after year... And it was a young man from Nuseirat, married, with a newborn baby, and one of the lucky ones, too, with a job, who forced an Israeli bus into a

ravine, killing 15, and he wasn't under orders from Fateh or the PFLP or Hamas, his was a personal explosion, maybe he'd been dwelling on his best friend, whose spine had been cut through by an Israeli bullet... And someone asks me what Americans think of Palestinians, and I try to answer, throwing in that the killing of collaborators hasn't gone over

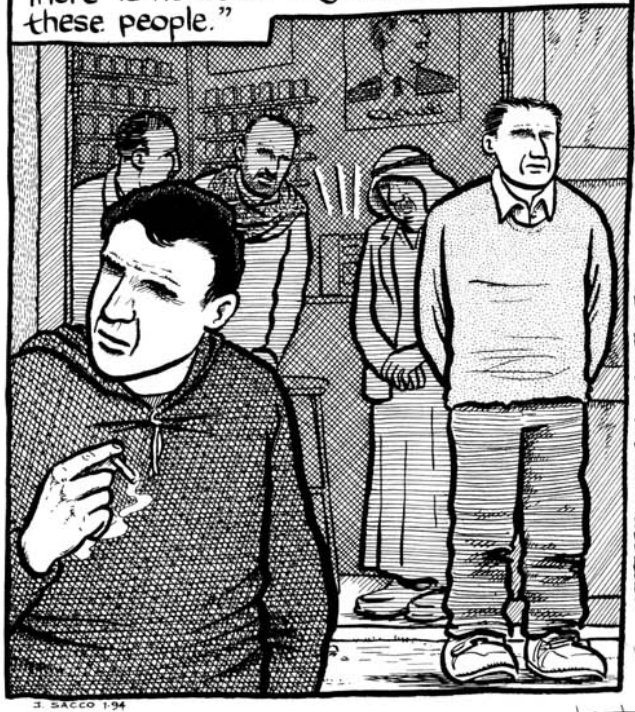


J. SACCO 1·94

too well, from mid '90 to mid '91 83 alleged collaborators were killed in Gaza by other Palestinians, which is more than two and a half times those killed here by Israeli security forces in the same period...And Ibrahim says he doesn't care about American public opinion, he says, "We can't have these collaborators among us, assassinating us, telling

the Israelis what they know," and someone else says before the intifada the collaborators did as they pleased, now they're paying, he says maybe ten have been killed in Nuseirat, and someone recalls one collaborator being shoved down a street, the people beating him with their shoes, then a couple of cars drove

up with members of the Unified Leadership and Hamas, they took him to an orange grove and killed him. And they say sometimes the suspect's confession is taped and then played in cassette shops for everyone to hear, and, yes, they admit some suspects may be tortured, but Ibrahim says, "We have no jails, no imprisonment. There is no other way to deal with these people."



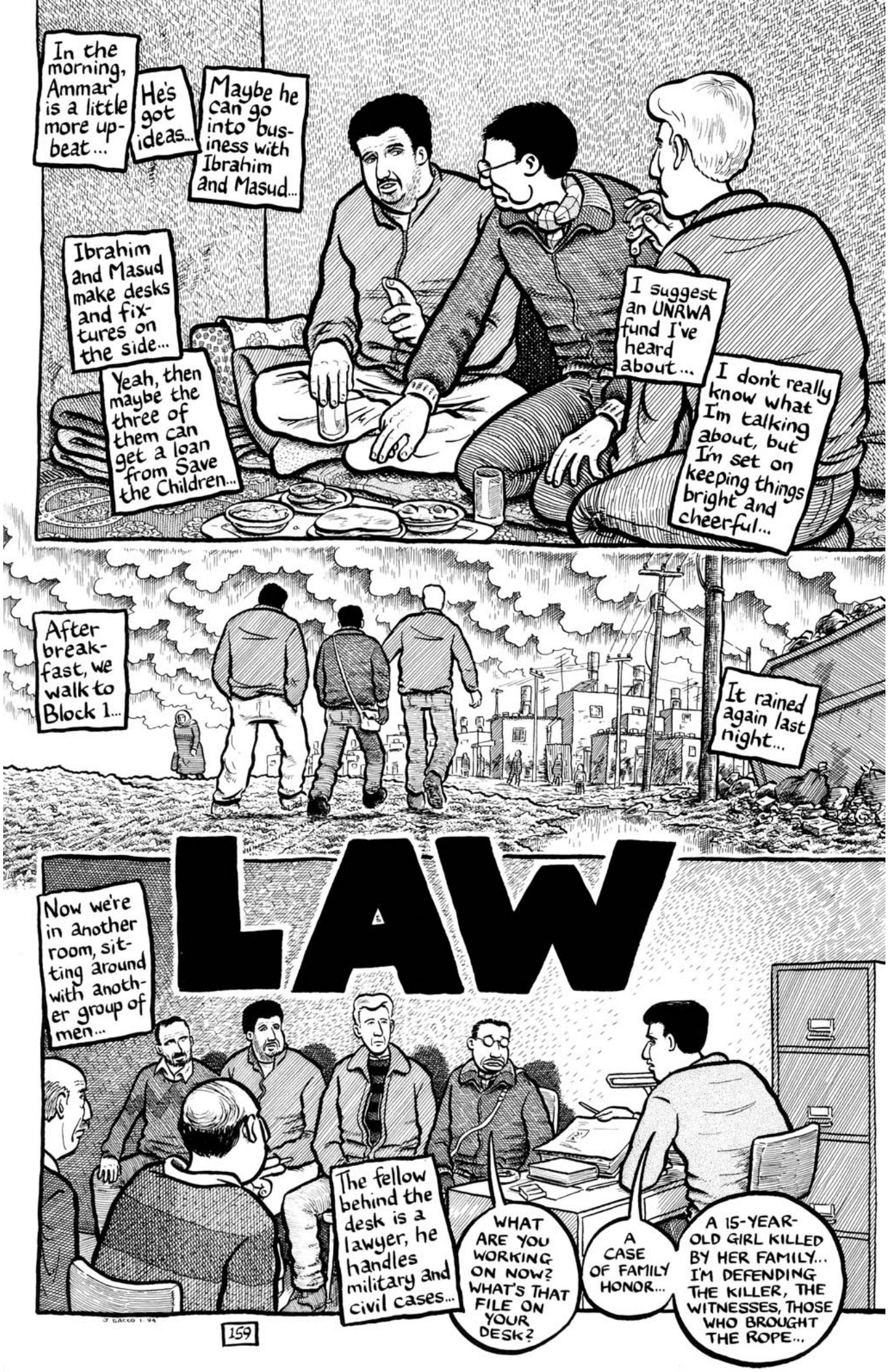
J. SACCO 1-94

Our party breaks up, the neighbors need to get home before the 8 o'clock curfew...

the rest of us cross the sandy area to a new room...

We settle in... Ibrahim tends to the coals while the rain beats hard on the corrugated asbestos roof...
This is the room of Ibrahim's brother...
Ibrahim's brother has been pretty quiet most of the evening...
I've been told his name two or three times... what was it?... Ammar
Ammar's wife and children have been sent elsewhere to make room for us...
Ibrahim's family lives in the other part of the house, the part with the new couch...
And by the way Ibrahim is telling us about Abu Jihad, how the PLO fighters held off the Israelis in Beirut — and with the jets dropping their phosphorous bombs!
Every time a topic dries up and we pass some moments in silence, Ammar welcomes us again in the Arab fashion...
AHLAN WA SAHLAN.
And we respond:
AHLAN BEEK.
After Ibrahim leaves to be with his family, Ammar fetches some papers...
...a medical report written by a Palestinian doctor, it begins "To Whom It May Concern"...
The subject is a 28-year-old woman from Nuseirat camp with "severe dyspnea, cyanosis and chest infections," she has "bronchiectasis bilateral advanced corpulmonale and episodes of C.H.F.", she needs a transplant of heart and lungs. A Montreal doctor has offered to do the lungs gratis, but there are other costs... "immune suppressive medications, physiotherapy, rehabilitation," and—
J. SACCO 1-94

Ammar wants to know if I can get the report to someone in the West...
if I can find another doctor or hospital that would help her...
if there's something I can do...
I DON'T-
I-
TELL HIM I'LL TRY TO TAKE THIS TO A DOCTOR.
Now Ammar and Larry are talking amongst themselves in Arabic...
and then...
HE SAYS HE HASN'T WORKED IN TWO YEARS.
HE TRIED TO START A BUSINESS REPAIRING REFRIGERATORS BUT IT NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND.
HE SAYS THERE'S NO WORK IN GAZA...
HE SAYS THE ISRAELIS ISSUE FEW PERMITS TO WORK IN ISRAEL...
HE SAYS IT'S NOT POSSIBLE FOR PALESTINIANS TO WORK IN THE GULF STATES SINCE THE WAR...
HE WANTS TO KNOW IF IT'S POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO GET WORK IN THE WEST...
HE'S ASKING ME?
I-
YOU KNOW I THINK IT'S PRETTY HARD TO ARRANGE WORK IN THE U.S.... EUROPE I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT BUT I THINK IT'D BE HARD THERE, TOO...
I DON'T KNOW...
Larry tells him...
AHLAN WA SAHLAN.
AHLAN BEEK.
J. SACCO 1-94


In the morning, Ammar is a little more up-beat...
He's got ideas...
Maybe he can go into business with Ibrahim and Masud...
Ibrahim and Masud make desks and fixtures on the side...
Yeah, then maybe the three of them can get a loan from Save the Children...
I suggest an UNRWA fund I've heard about...
I don't really know what I'm talking about, but I'm set on keeping things bright and cheerful...
After breakfast, we walk to Block 1...
It rained again last night...
LAW
Now we're in another room, sitting around with another group of men...
The fellow behind the desk is a lawyer, he handles military and civil cases...
WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW? WHAT'S THAT FILE ON YOUR DESK?
A CASE OF FAMILY HONOR...
A 15-YEAR-OLD GIRL KILLED BY HER FAMILY... I'M DEFENDING THE KILLER, THE WITNESSES, THOSE WHO BROUGHT THE ROPE...
J. SACCO 1-94

SHE WAS MARRIED, SHE COMMITTED ADULTERY WITH A COLLABORATOR...
HER FAMILY STRANGLED HER.
Islamic law, he says, calls for death to adulterers...
The same punishment would have been meted out to the collaborator, he says, but he's under Israeli protection...
Typically, he says, adulterers are shunned, treated as pariahs... he says killings like this one are unusual... in this case, he says, the family took the law into its own hands...
THE ISRAELIS WANT TO HANDLE THIS CASE IN A MILITARY COURT BECAUSE THEIR COLLABORATOR IS INVOLVED...
MY CASE RESTS ON THE FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION, WHICH REQUIRES AN OCCUPYING POWER TO RESPECT THE LAWS AND MORES OF THE TERRITORY IT OCCUPIES...
ALSO, THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS CALL FOR THE SAME PUNISHMENT FOR ADULTERY*
THIS IS A RELIGIOUS CASE AND SHOULD NOT SIT BEFORE A MILITARY COURT.
*SEE DEUTERONOMY 22:22-27, FOR EX
J. SACCO 3-94
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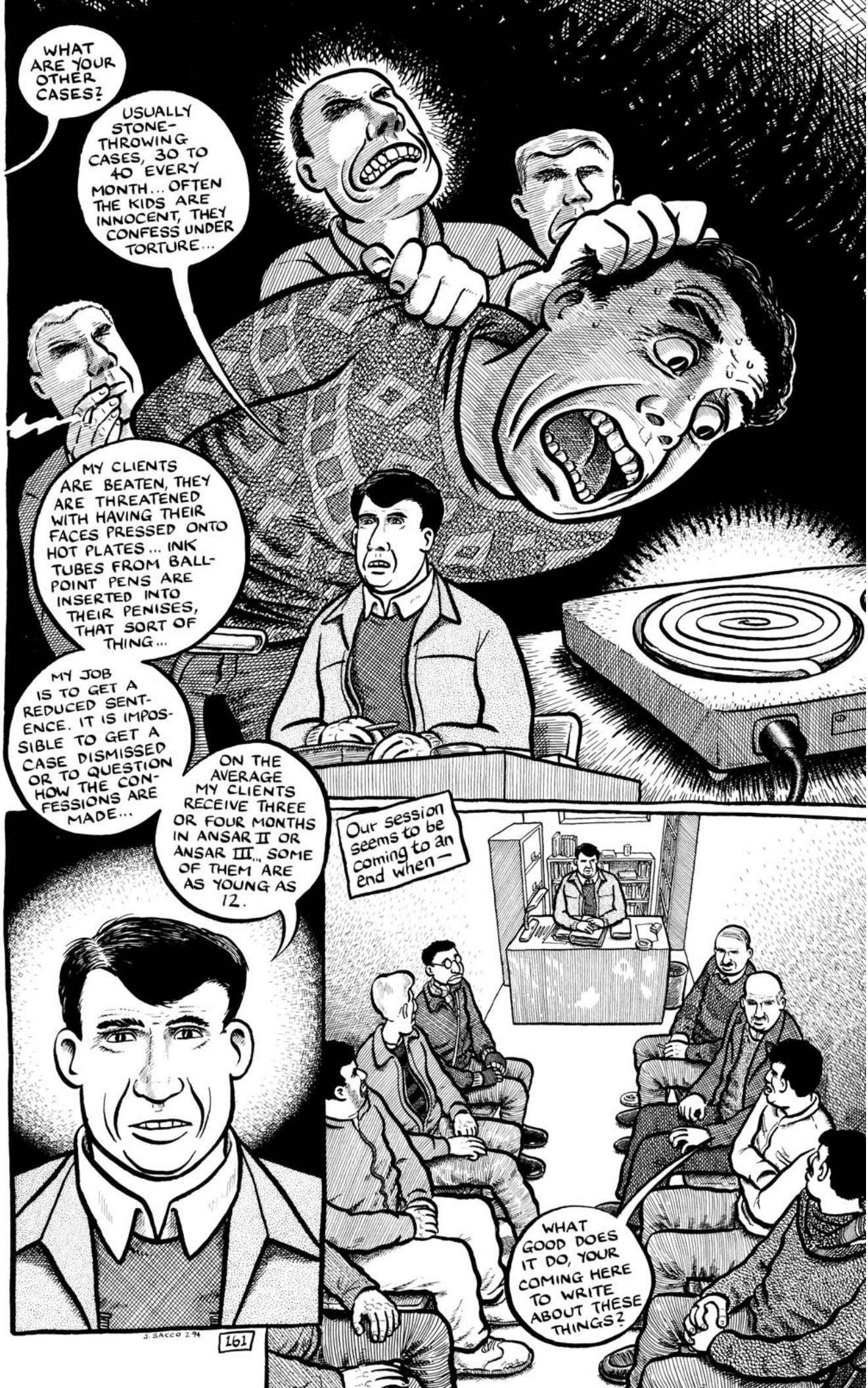
WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER CASES?
USUALLY STONE-THROWING CASES, 30 TO 40 EVERY MONTH... OFTEN THE KIDS ARE INNOCENT, THEY CONFESS UNDER TORTURE...
MY CLIENTS ARE BEATEN, THEY ARE THREATENED WITH HAVING THEIR FACES PRESSED ONTO HOT PLATES... INK TUBES FROM BALL-POINT PENS ARE INSERTED INTO THEIR PENISES, THAT SORT OF THING...
MY JOB IS TO GET A REDUCED SENTENCE. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GET A CASE DISMISSED OR TO QUESTION HOW THE CONFESSIONS ARE MADE...
ON THE AVERAGE MY CLIENTS RECEIVE THREE OR FOUR MONTHS IN ANSAR II OR ANSAR III... SOME OF THEM ARE AS YOUNG AS 12.
Our session seems to be coming to an end when—
WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO, YOUR COMING HERE TO WRITE ABOUT THESE THINGS?
J. SACCO 2.94
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FOR 50 YEARS PEOPLE HAVE BEEN WRITING ABOUT US...
SINCE THE INTIFADA, JOURNALISTS HAVE COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, PALESTINE IS FULL OF JOURNALISTS...
AT FIRST WE MADE THEM VERY WELCOME, WE SHOWED THEM EVERYTHING...
BUT WHAT'S BEEN DONE FOR PALESTINE?
WHAT HAS CHANGED?
NOTHING PERSONAL.
WHAT DO AMERICANS THINK OF WHAT ISRAEL HAS DONE?
WHAT DO AMERICANS THINK OF INTERNATIONAL LAW? ARE THEY AWARE OF SUCH A THING?
WHAT ABOUT THE U.N. RESOLUTIONS TELLING ISRAEL TO WITHDRAW? 242? 338?
OR DO U.N. RESOLUTIONS ONLY COUNT AGAINST IRAQ?
AMERICANS CARE MORE ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS THAN ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO US!
AND WHAT ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF GEORGE HABASH* WHEN HE NEEDED MEDICAL ATTENTION IN FRANCE? THEY KICKED HIM OUT!
*GEORGE HABASH - leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.
WASN'T THE SHAH ADMITTED TO AMERICA WHEN HE WAS SICK?
J. SACCO 2-94
THEY CALL HABASH A TERRORIST!
WHAT ABOUT WHEN THE ISRAELIS BOMBED BEIRUT?
WHAT DID AMERICANS THINK OF THAT?
162

We get a lift back to Block 2...
On the way, we pass a couple of hooded, uniformed men walking in the open like they own the place...
In Gaza, you can take your pick:
there's one family's version of Islamic law for an adulterous daughter...
...there's Israeli military justice for kids who may or may not have thrown stones...
...there's conventions made in Geneva for an occupying power to follow:...
...there's U.N. resolutions calling for the occupying power to withdraw...
But at the moment, on a stretch of mire between Block 1 and Block 2 in Nuseirat camp, these guys are in charge...
...it's their law now, whatever that might be...
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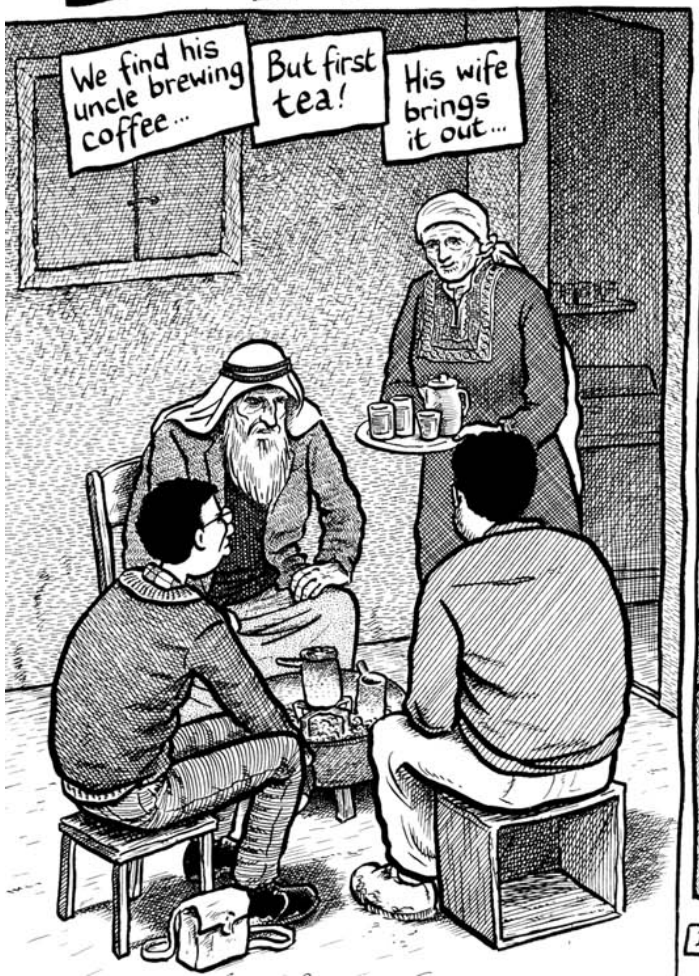
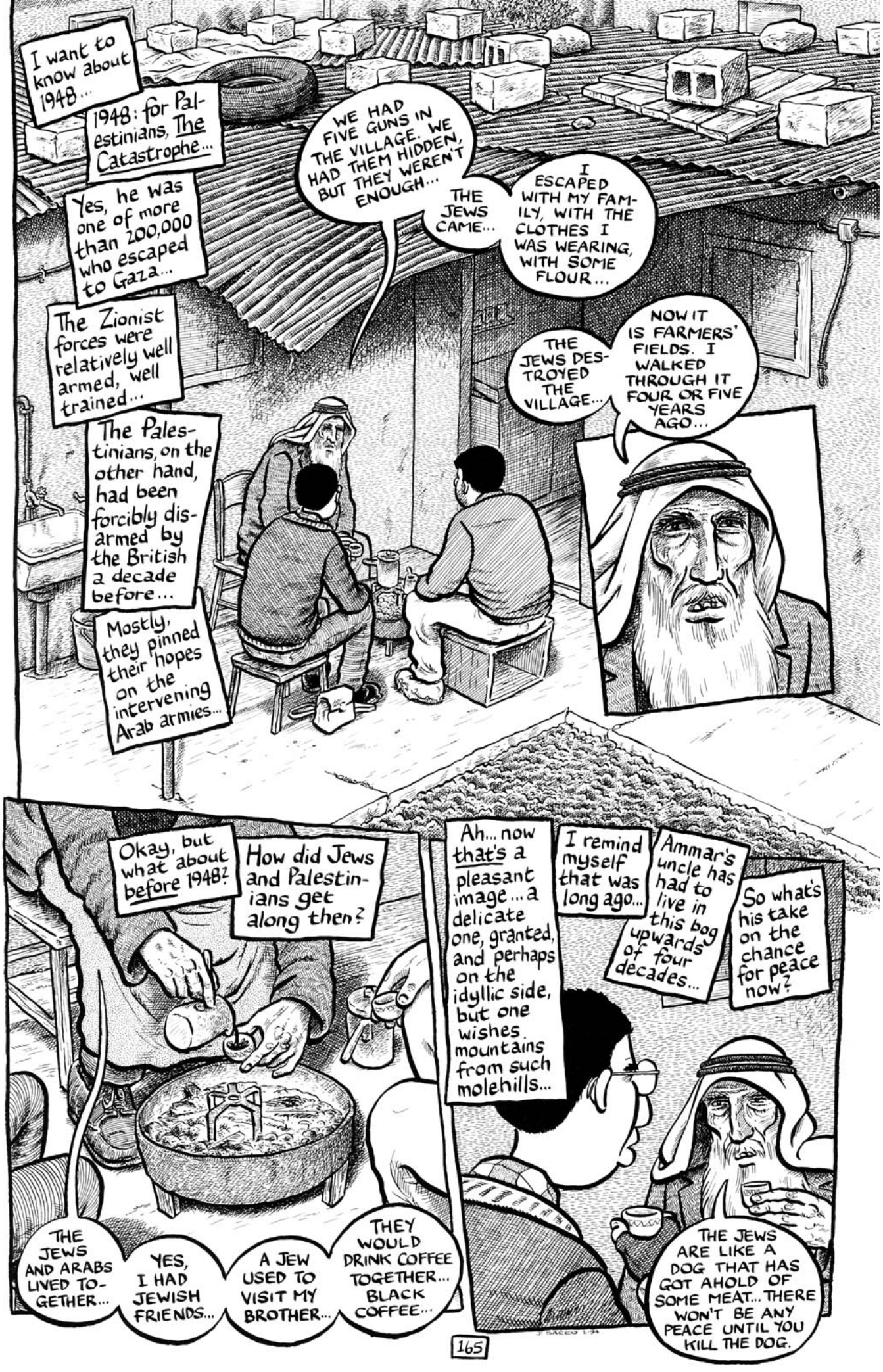
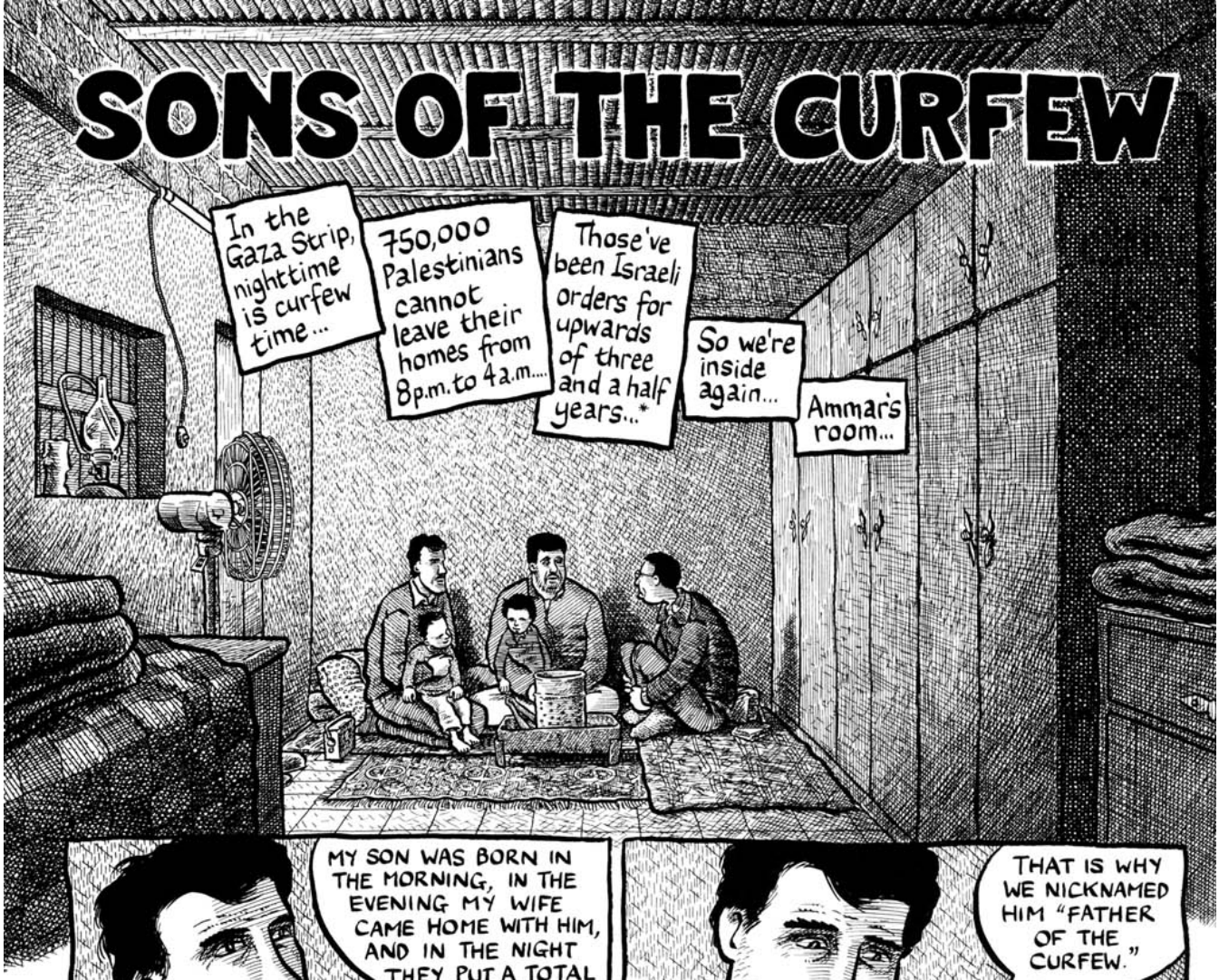
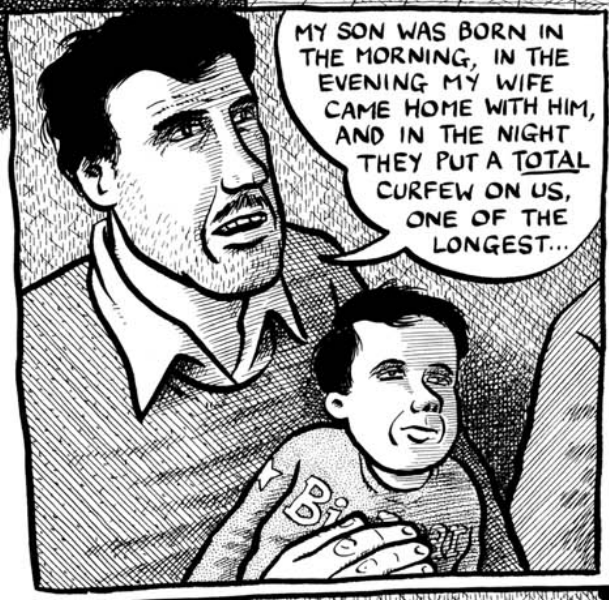
BLACK COFFEE




I want to know about 1948...
1948: for Palestinians, The Catastrophe...
Yes, he was one of more than 200,000 who escaped to Gaza...
The Zionist forces were relatively well armed, well trained...
The Palestinians, on the other hand, had been forcibly disarmed by the British a decade before...
Mostly, they pinned their hopes on the intervening Arab armies...
WE HAD FIVE GUNS IN THE VILLAGE. WE HAD THEM HIDDEN, BUT THEY WEREN'T ENOUGH...
THE JEWS CAME...
I ESCAPED WITH MY FAMILY, WITH THE CLOTHES I WAS WEARING, WITH SOME FLOUR...
THE JEWS DESTROYED THE VILLAGE...
NOW IT IS FARMERS' FIELDS. I WALKED THROUGH IT FOUR OR FIVE YEARS AGO...
Okay, but what about before 1948?
How did Jews and Palestinians get along then?
THE JEWS AND ARABS LIVED TOGETHER...
YES, I HAD JEWISH FRIENDS...
A JEW USED TO VISIT MY BROTHER...
THEY WOULD DRINK COFFEE TOGETHER... BLACK COFFEE...
Ah... now that's a pleasant image... a delicate one, granted, and perhaps on the idyllic side, but one wishes mountains from such molehills...
I remind myself that was long ago...
Ammar's uncle has had to live in this bog upwards of four decades...
So what's his take on the chance for peace now?
THE JEWS ARE LIKE A DOG THAT HAS GOT AHOLD OF SOME MEAT... THERE WON'T BE ANY PEACE UNTIL YOU KILL THE DOG.
J. SACCO 1.94

SONS OF THE CURFEW





*AS OF FEB. 1992

J. SACCO 2.94

It's not a good world, and these refugees sons of a refugee's sons are growing up knowing the score...
Big Bear
They've been taught to distinguish between where they're from — a village disappeared by the Zionists in 1948 — and where they live — Nuseirat camp, Block 2...
After the children are put to sleep, Ibrahim leafs through my guidebook. He stops at an illustration of an Arab and a donkey...
IT IS AN ISRAELI BOOK?
NO, I THINK IT'S AUSTRALIAN.
IS THIS HOW THEY THINK OF US? LEADING A DONKEY?
YOU WILL TELL THEM WHAT YOU SEE HERE!
IN MY FAMILY, MY COUSINS, WE HAVE STUDENTS! A PROFESSOR! A TEACHER OF COMPUTERS!
ARABS HAVE TECHNOLOGY! AND WE PALESTINIANS LOVE EDUCATION!
YOU SHOULD DRAW SHAMIR'S FACE ON THE ARAB AND BEGIN'S ON THE DONKEY!*
Israel
a travel survival kit
Neil Tilbury
Later, a dog is barking... Ibrahim turns down the Oum Koulsoum cassette...
Vehicles are passing outside...
THE SOLDIERS.
J. SACCO '94
*MENACHEM BEGIN - former prime minister of Israel
YITZHAK SHAMIR - then current prime minister.
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TOMATOES
In the morning, we visit the workshop where Ibrahim and Masud make the desks...
Masud explains the set-up, how the operation works...
Ammar would like to work here, too...
I want to take a photo, I tell them to pretend they're working on a desk...
Ammar pretends he's putting in a screw...
The make-believe is over, it's time to head out...
168
J SACCO 3.94

There are some nice homes on the road to Deir el-Balah from Nuseirat camp, Block 2...
I didn't expect to find people sitting pretty in a place like Gaza, but I suppose somehow some people always manage it...
I'M NOT LOOKING FOR SUCH A HOME...
I WANT SOME MONEY ONLY TO MAKE A PROPER FLOOR, NOT THE SAND.
I WANT TO FIX THE KITCHEN.
I WANT TO MAKE A PROPER TOILET.
Yeah, a toilet! Last night, during the storm...with all that wind and rain coming down...
I mean, I'm used to the hole-in-the-ground variety by now, but Ammar's toilet lacks some basic features...
Like, it could use a couple more walls...
169

I'm supposed to meet someone in Deir el-Balah, that guy at the lawyer's with all those questions...just to show there weren't any hard feelings, he invited me to tour the family greenhouses...
Ammar knows his house...
Here we are... nice place...
introductions...
a cousin once removed...
we'll go in his car...
On the way, the cousin rails against Israel's stranglehold on the Palestinian agricultural sector...
And he ain't joshing, just take the for instance of getting goods to market...
Trucking produce a few dozen miles from Gaza to the West Bank requires six different permits...
the vehicle pass alone needs clearance from five different offices...
the produce permit requires a 12,000 shekel advance to the Value Added Tax Authorities (and, incidentally, while Israeli farmers can expect refunds on the 18 percent VAT on inputs, Palestinian farmers get no such break)...
given those hurdles and the necessity of going through Israeli middlemen, a Gazan farmer shipping to Europe typically pays twice the air freight as his Israeli counterpart...
J SACCO 3/94

Perhaps the sorest point is Israel's dominance of Palestinian water resources... the Israelis pump West Bank water to Israel and Jewish settlements at such a rate that only 17 percent is left for Palestinians... Here in Gaza, Israel controls 35 percent of the water supply, and the drilling of 200-meter wells from the settlements has increased the salinity in shallow Palestinian wells to dangerous levels... It can be not just unhealthy to drink—the salty water damages Gazan crops...
Meanwhile, the Israelis all but forbid Gazans to dig new wells or deepen existing ones...
Despite all this, these guys want to prove that Palestinians know how to grow a tomato...
See them?
See how good they are?
Here, take some!
take!
J. SACCO 3.94
While we're out here, they inspect the damage from last night's storm. On the way over we've seen dozens of greenhouses ripped open. Some of theirs are damaged, too, and each greenhouse costs $5,000, they say...
171

The next stop is a warehouse where the tomatoes are packaged...
They want to show me how carefully the produce is inspected, the quality of the quality control...
YOU SEE? YOU SEE?
Okay! I'm a believer!
Gazan tomatoes, man... the best!
There's another visitor on the premises, a Palestinian-American from Tennessee... he's spending a few weeks visiting the motherland...
He knows about tomatoes...
THESE TOMATOES WILL GO TO EUROPE, BUT THEY'LL SHIP THROUGH ISRAEL...
WHAT THE ISRAELIS DO IS LEAVE THEM AT THE AIRPORT FOR DAYS, OR SHIP THEM ONLY AFTER THEIR OWN PRODUCE IS SHIPPED...
OFTEN, BY THE TIME THESE TOMATOES GET TO EUROPE, THEY'RE SPOILED...
THE PACKAGERS AND FARMERS BACK HERE HAVE TO PAY FOR IT, AND THEIR REPUTATIONS ARE DAMAGED...
TOMATOES
غزة
I find tomatoes being packed into cartons labelled "Israeli Tomatoes"...
Each tomato has a Carmel® sticker saying "Produce of Israel"...
BUT THESE AREN'T ISRAELI TOMATOES!
RIGHT, BUT THEY'RE LABELLED ISRAELI AND THEY'LL GO STRAIGHT TO EUROPE.
THE SAME TOMATOES LABELLED GAZA WON'T
BUT THIS IS A DECEPTION! DON'T THESE WORKERS KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING?
THEY NEED THE WORK. IT'S HARD TO GET A PERMIT TO WORK IN ISRAEL THESE DAYS.
Carmel
ISRAELI
J. SACCO 3-94

The workers make clear they're not happy about it either...
Sure, Carmel is profiting from mis-labelled Gazan produce...
...and obviously some Palestinian middlemen are in cahoots...
but what can they do?
ISRAELI TOMATOES
It's a pretty drive back to Deir el-Balah...
J. SACCO '94
Once there, the tomato farmers invite me and Ammar into their nice home...
there's a whole set of brothers and cousins to meet in the living room...
Yep, another Palestinian room...
...warmer and much more comfortable than usual, but, nonetheless, a room in Palestine...
in other words, let the tales of woe begin!
This one just out of prison...
His father killed by the Israelis in '68...
His uncle dead of a heart attack in an Israeli command jeep...
The tea starts pouring and so do the Palestinians...
173

Now they want my opinion...
what do I think of Hanan Ashrawi?
Assad of Syria?
Saddam Hussein?
George Habash?
Arafat?
Abu Jihad?
What do Americans think?
Of 242?
338?
The other relevant U.N. resolutions?
WELL
INDEED
AS I SAID
FURTHERMORE
even Ammar pipes in:
IS IT POSSIBLE TO GO TO AMERICA TO STUDY?
We transfer our conversation to a large table where chow awaits us in abundance, and the pita's still warm—right out of the oven in back... Now this is what I call a shindig!
Sure these guys have suffered indignities and worse...
...and the Israelis might be gouging them with taxes and messing with their exports...
and there's several $5,000 greenhouses that need fixing after last night's storm...
but no one's going hungry in this household...
Ammar, who comes from down the road, Nuseirat camp, Block 2, who doesn't have a proper floor or kitchen, whose toilet keeps out neither the wind nor the rain, who lives with his family in one room under a corrugated asbestos roof, sits next to me and eats a little...
not much
me? I've never been a mousy guest...
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J. SACCO '94

ONE SHEKEL TO GAZA TOWN
J. SACCO '94

THANKS FOR EVERY-THING, AMMAR.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU ENOUGH.
YOU'VE BEEN VERY KIND.
NO NO, AMMAR, I CAN PAY!
AMMAR, PLEASE!!
I PAY!

EDWARD SAID
HOT WATER
HOT
I will never forget the shower at Larry's flat in Gaza Town that night...
nor the hot meal, nor the heater Larry puts in front of me...
I CAN NEVER SPEND MORE THAN TWO DAYS THERE.
THAT PLACE REALLY DEPRESSES ME.
YOU KNOW THAT FAMILY HONOR KILLING THAT LAWYER WAS HANDLING? THAT REALLY SHOOK ME UP. WHAT DID YOU THINK?
THE IDEA OF ARMED STRUGGLE BOTHERS ME. I THINK THE TAKING OF SOMEONE'S LIFE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES IS WRONG. KILLING SOMEONE IS NEGATING THAT PERSON.
After Larry goes to bed, I poke around his library and select Edward Said's 'Orientalism'...
The talk with Larry has sharpened my wits and I make it through a couple dozen pages of Said's dense prose...
I like Edward Said...
He's a Palestinian-American, a professor at Columbia...
His 'The Question of Palestine' is one of the reasons I am here...
Tomorrow I'm going to another camp, Jabalia...
I'd rather not...
I'd rather sit around a heater with people like Larry and read Edward Said...
J. SACCO 3.94
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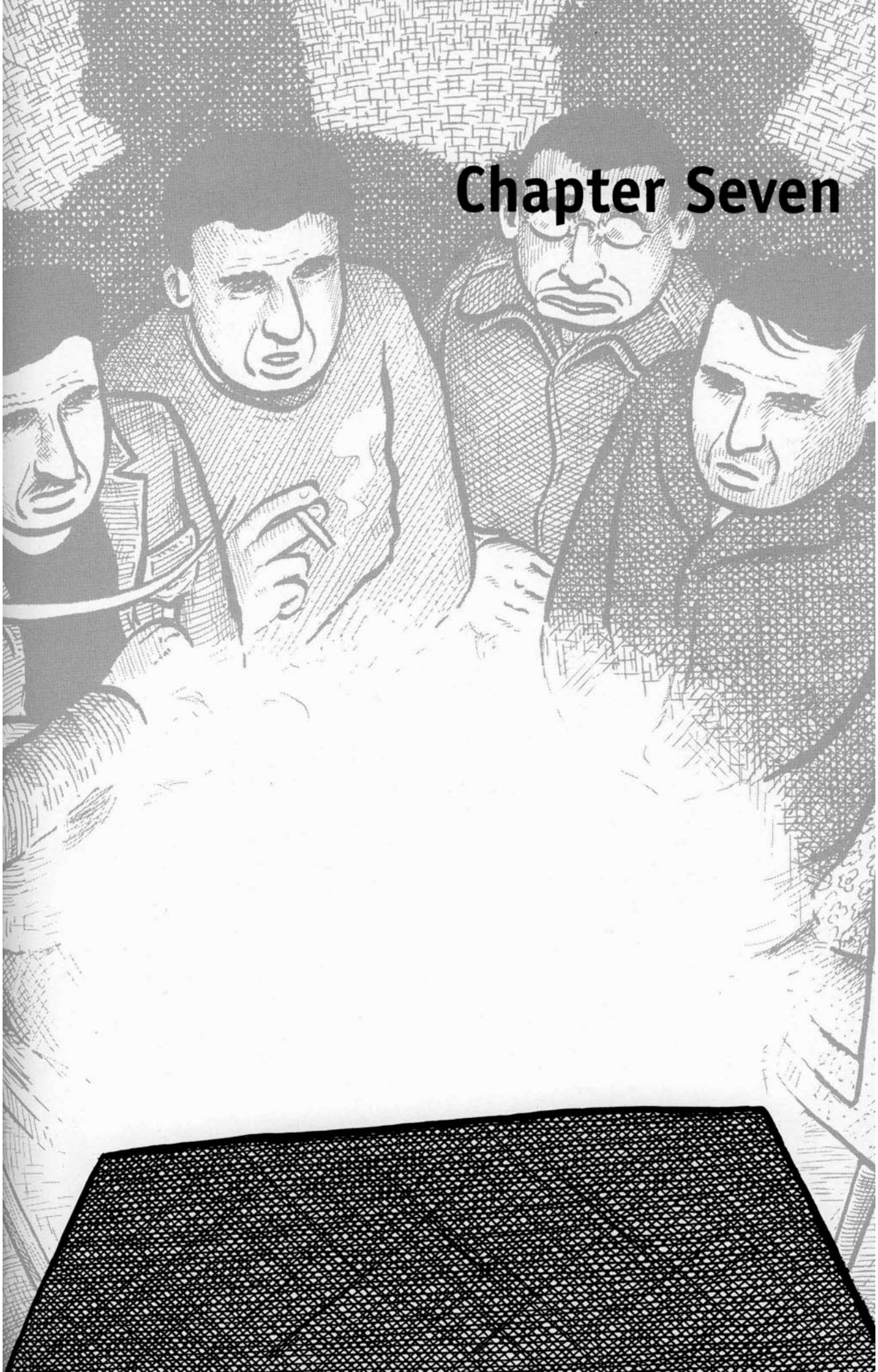
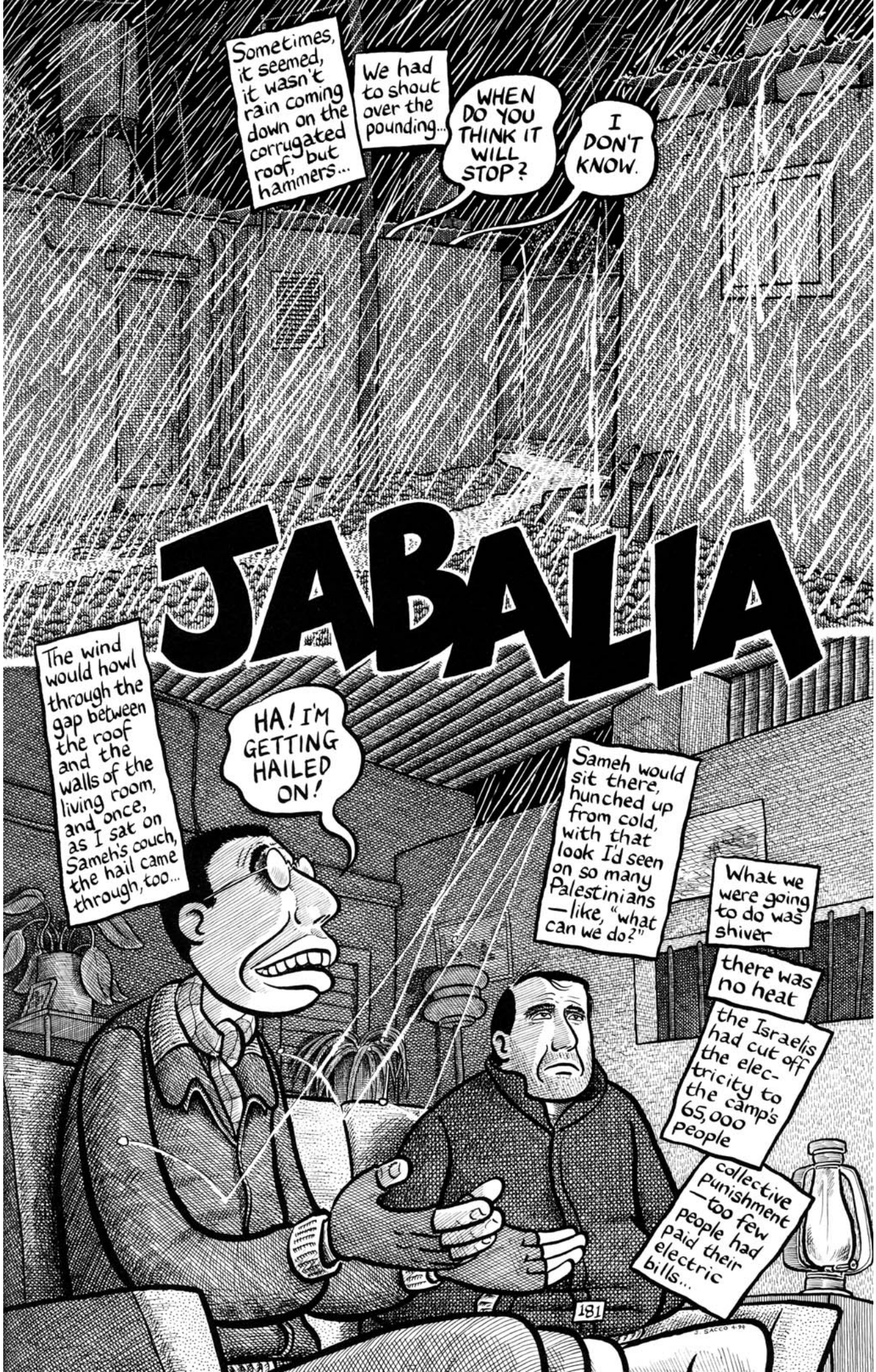


Chapter Seven


Sometimes, it seemed, it wasn't rain coming down on the corrugated roof, but hammers...
We had to shout over the pounding...
WHEN DO YOU THINK IT WILL STOP?
I DON'T KNOW.
JABALIA
The wind would howl through the gap between the roof and the walls of the living room, and once, as I sat on Sameh's couch, the hail came through, too...
HA! I'M GETTING HAILED ON!
Sameh would sit there, hunched up from cold, with that look I'd seen on so many Palestinians —like, "what can we do?"
What we were going to do was shiver
there was no heat
the Israelis had cut off the electricity to the camp's 65,000 people
collective punishment —too few people had paid their electric bills...
181
SACCO 4-94

Sameh paid his, sort of...
He'd let his electric meter run the first ten days of the month till it racked up about $50 worth. Then he'd stop it...
What could he do? He hadn't earned any money in two years...
He lived off savings he'd made working abroad and off his father's slim wage as a day laborer in Israel...
Sameh was anything but idle, however; he did volunteer social work at the camp's rehabilitation center, a facility he and several others had helped set up...
He told me the story once, how he and the others made proposals, enlisted the support of community leaders and health organizations, how they'd gone door-to-door for funds...
Now the facility had a staff of volunteer teachers, its own syllabus, and two dozen deaf and dumb students...
By Jabalia standards it was a roaring success...
J. SACCO 5-94
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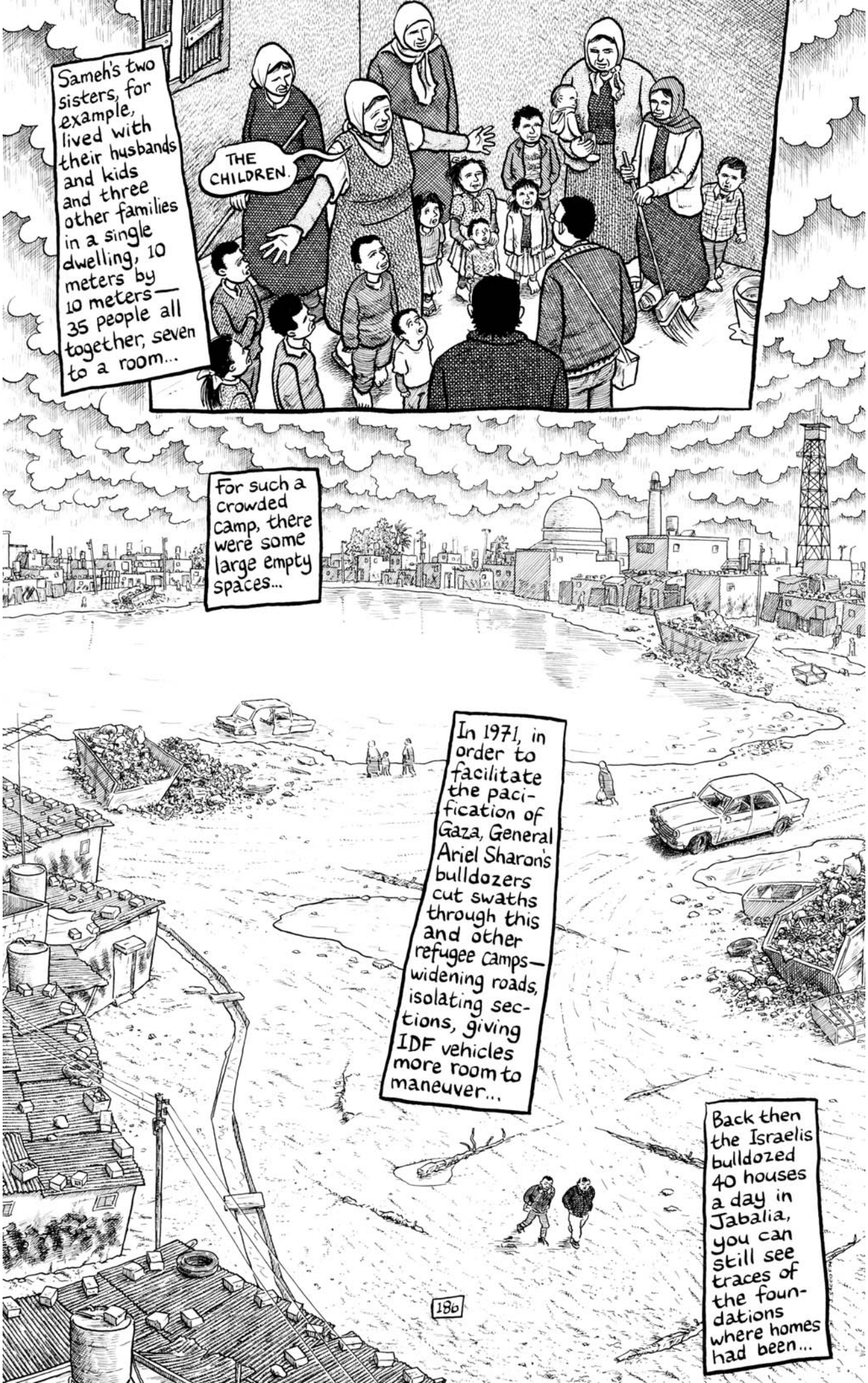
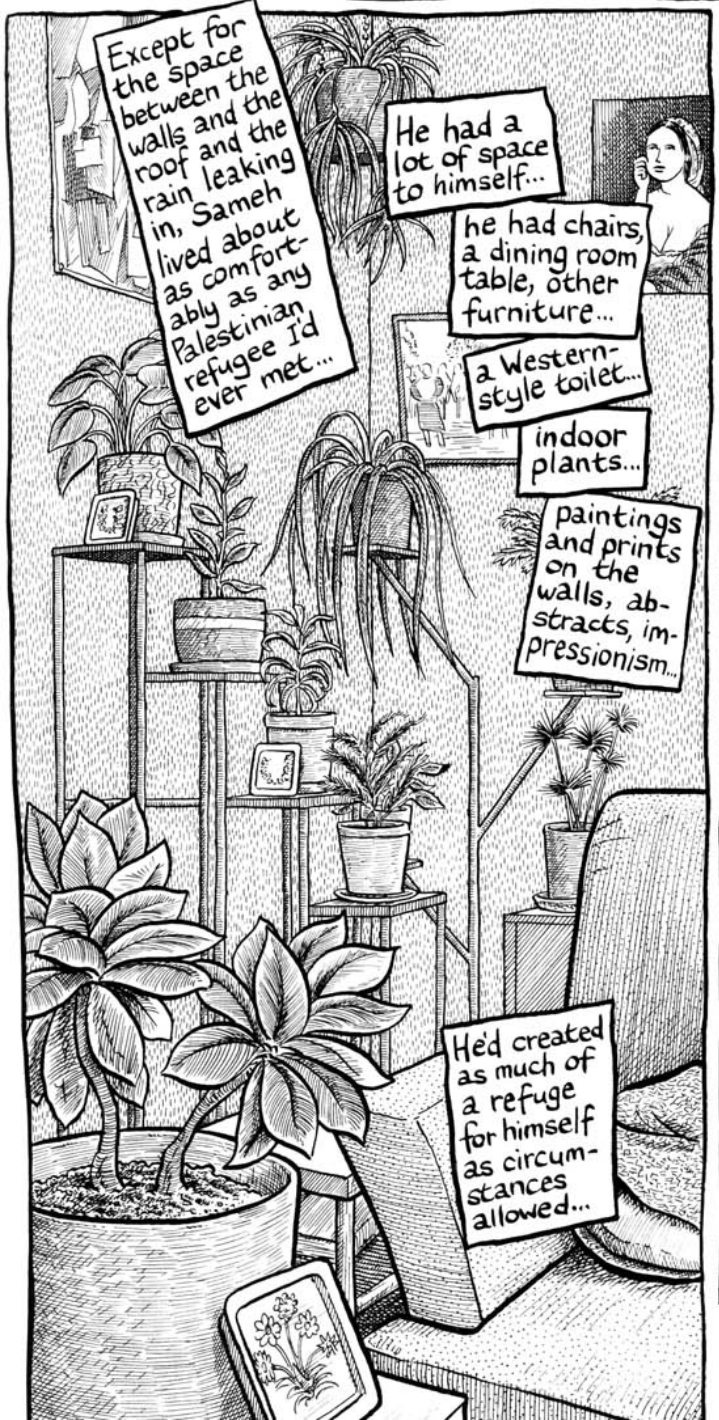
I'd hang out at the rehabilitation center drinking tea and writing in my journal till Sameh got off work in the early afternoon...
then he was at my disposal, he was my translator, he'd set me up with whomever I wanted, he was very methodical about my list...
WHO'S NEXT?
I'D LIKE TO TALK TO AN OLD PERSON, SOMEONE WHO REMEMBERS 1948...
and so it went, he arranged one interview after another...
Once we just walked around the camp, checking out the damage from the storms...
There were watermarks on the sides of houses corresponding to the flooding when the sewers overflowed...
Some people were sandbagging their doorways in anticipation of the next deluge...
some houses had been abandoned...
183

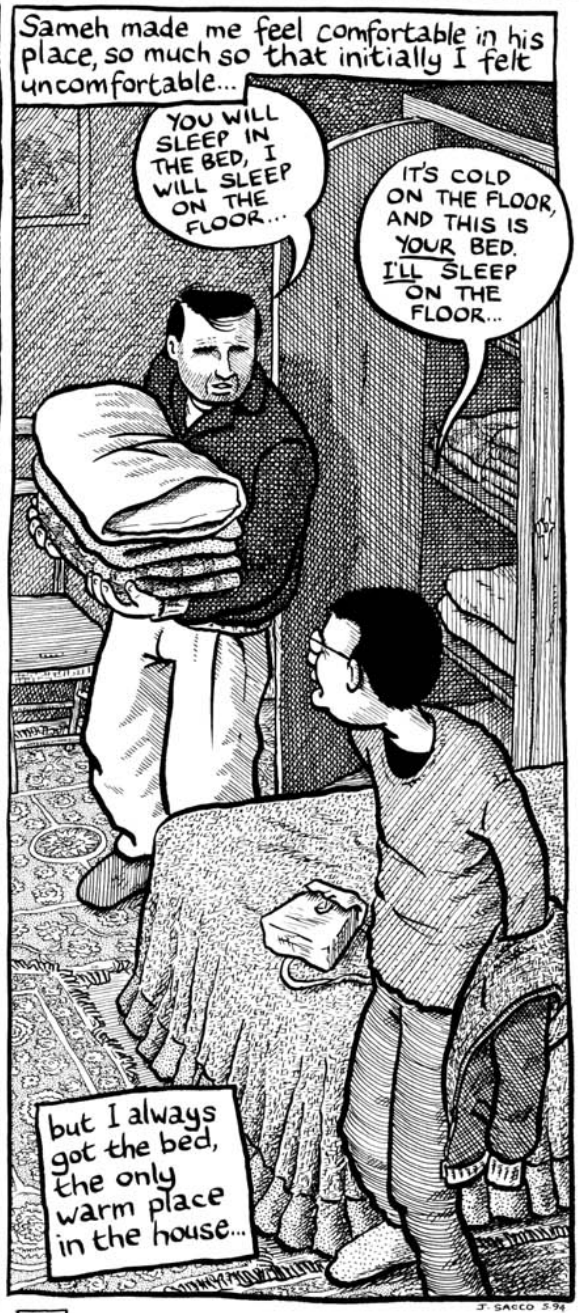
People were spreading plastic sheets over their roofs to stop the leaking, hoping bags of stones would hold the plastic down in the wind...
In one house, an old man demonstrated the water damage by picking chunks from a wall with his hands...
HE'S ASKING US TO STAY FOR TEA.
LET'S MOVE ON.
One woman showed us a room where a section of roof had blown off in the storm. Plastic was covering the hole...
I asked if I could take a photo...she misunderstood, thought I wanted her picture...
SHE SAYS IT COSTS $200 TO REPLACE THE ROOF...
THEY'VE GONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR HELP, BUT THERE WERE MANY PEOPLE THERE WITH THE SAME PROBLEM... THEY WERE TURNED AWAY.
NO, I WANT A PICTURE OF THE DAMAGE...
Maybe I should've taken her picture after all...
J.SACCO 4.94

Gaza has the highest birthrate in the Middle East, and, according to some sources, Jabalia refugee camp is the most densely populated place on Earth — 65,000 people in two square kilometers...


Sameh's two sisters, for example, lived with their husbands and kids and three other families in a single dwelling, 10 meters by 10 meters—35 people all together, seven to a room...
THE CHILDREN.
For such a crowded camp, there were some large empty spaces...
In 1971, in order to facilitate the pacification of Gaza, General Ariel Sharon's bulldozers cut swaths through this and other refugee camps—widening roads, isolating sections, giving IDF vehicles more room to maneuver...
Back then the Israelis bulldozed 40 houses a day in Jabalia, you can still see traces of the foundations where homes had been...
180

After the days' excursions, after curfew, when the rains and wind seemed to be at their strongest and you could practically hear the camp getting damaged, Sameh and I would sit in his rooms and tell each other the stories of our lives...
He had studied in Cairo and taught philosophy in Yemen...


Except for the space between the walls and the roof and the rain leaking in, Sameh lived about as comfortably as any Palestinian refugee I'd ever met...
He had a lot of space to himself...
he had chairs, a dining room table, other furniture...
a Western-style toilet...
indoor plants...
paintings and prints on the walls, abstracts, impressionism...
He'd created as much of a refuge for himself as circumstances allowed...


Sameh made me feel comfortable in his place, so much so that initially I felt uncomfortable...
YOU WILL SLEEP IN THE BED, I WILL SLEEP ON THE FLOOR...
IT'S COLD ON THE FLOOR, AND THIS IS YOUR BED. I'LL SLEEP ON THE FLOOR...
but I always got the bed, the only warm place in the house...
J. SACCO 5.94

Sometime before five, the call to prayer would roll out of the dark and wake us up... we could hear it from three different mosques...
الله مو اكبر
الله مو اكبر
الله مو اكبر
The minaret loudspeakers had other functions...
WHAT DOES IT SAY?
AN ANNOUNCEMENT: A CHILD IS MISSING. IF ANYONE FINDS HIM, PLEASE BRING HIM TO THE MOSQUE.
I wasn't sure about Sameh's adherence to Islam, but he wasn't demonstrative about such things...
He didn't wear his politics on his cuff, either...
Sure he opposed the occupation, but he didn't support any particular resistance organization...
He was even hesitant to wear the keffiyeh, even after I started wearing one...
PLO
The color of the traditional scarf is a shorthand way of identifying sympathy for certain of the PLO factions...
Sameh's black one was associated with Fateh, Arafat's organization...
I NEVER WEAR IT...
YOU WATCH, SOMEONE WILL SAY SOMETHING... THEY'LL THINK I'M WITH FATEH...
188

Sure enough, on our way to the next appointment...
FATEH.
YOU SEE?
I don't quite know what Sameh got out of hosting me for four days, indulging my quest for unhappy stories...
WHO'S NEXT ON YOUR LIST?
SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN INJURED IN THE INTIFADA.
but he said he enjoyed talking to Westerners, and we became friends...
Toward the end of my stay, when I'd been in Gaza almost a week and was beginning to wish I'd brought a change of clothes, Sameh laid out some things of his own for me to wear...
NO, SAMEH, THANK YOU BUT I COULDN'T.
WHY NOT?
I JUST CAN'T.
Because you have to draw the line somewhere...
You can eat a refugee's food and you can sleep in his bed... you can walk in his mud and step over the same dead rats...
But wearing his underwear?
You gotta keep some distance...
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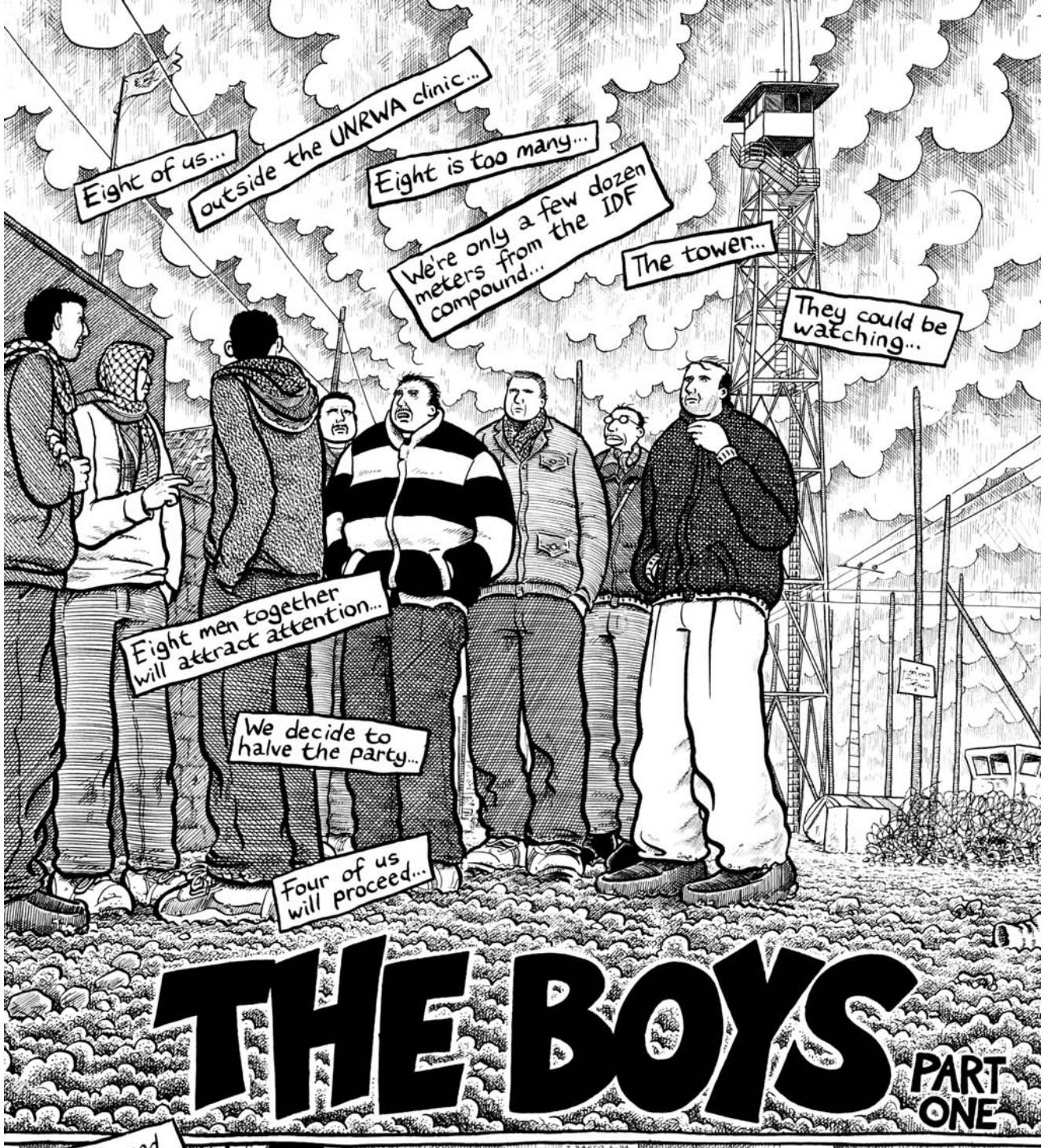
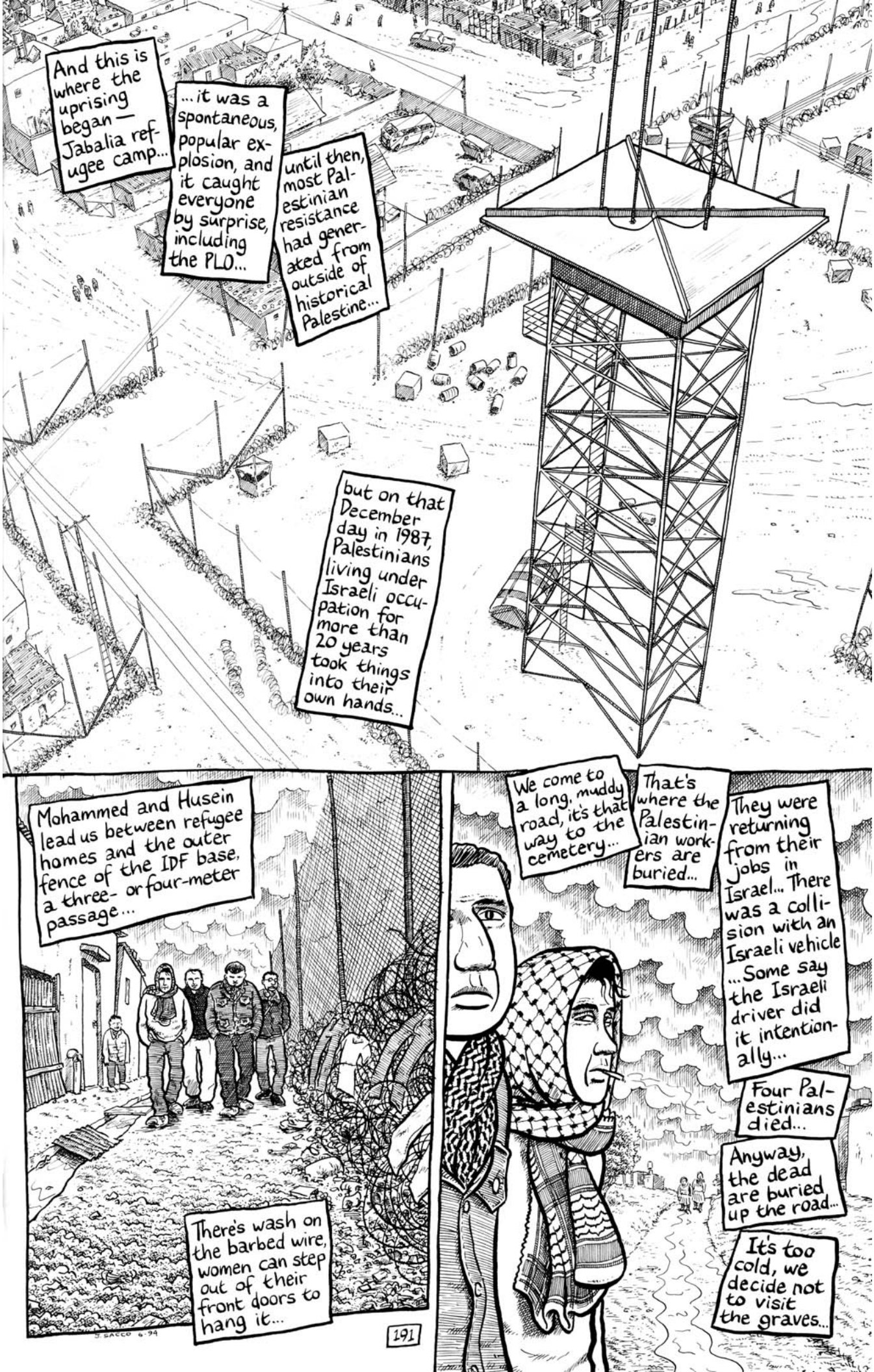


THE BOYS PART ONE


And this is where the uprising began — Jabalia refugee camp...
...it was a spontaneous, popular explosion, and it caught everyone by surprise, including the PLO...
until then, most Palestinian resistance had generated from outside of historical Palestine...
but on that December day in 1987, Palestinians living under Israeli occupation for more than 20 years took things into their own hands...
Mohammed and Husein lead us between refugee homes and the outer fence of the IDF base, a three- or four-meter passage...
There's wash on the barbed wire, women can step out of their front doors to hang it...
We come to a long, muddy road, it's that way to the cemetery...
That's where the Palestinian workers are buried...
They were returning from their jobs in Israel... There was a collision with an Israeli vehicle ...Some say the Israeli driver did it intentionally...
Four Palestinians died...
Anyway, the dead are buried up the road...
It's too cold, we decide not to visit the graves...
J. SACCO 6-94
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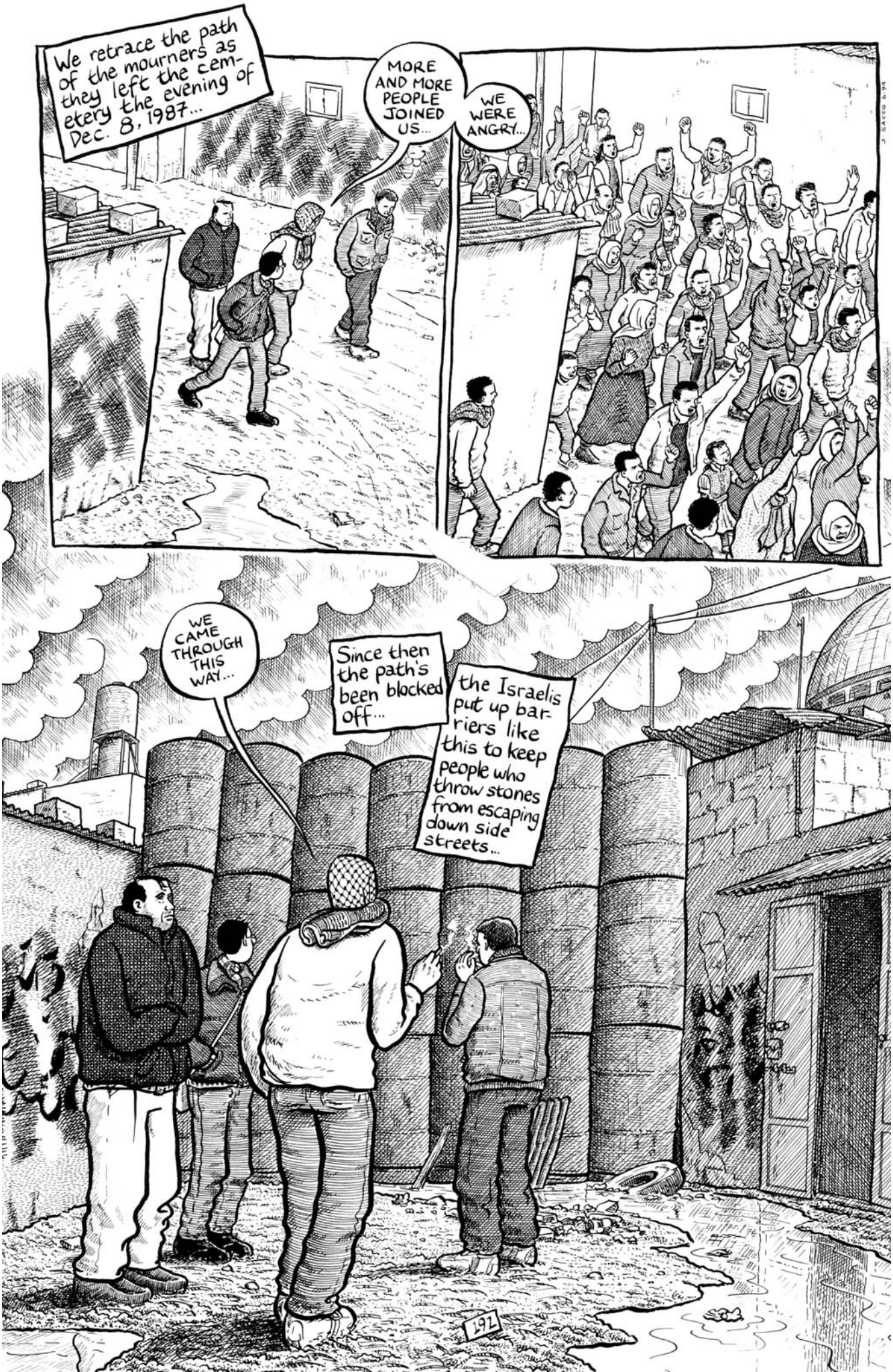
We retrace the path of the mourners as they left the cemetery the evening of Dec. 8, 1987...
MORE AND MORE PEOPLE JOINED US...
WE WERE ANGRY...
WE CAME THROUGH THIS WAY...
Since then the path's been blocked off...
the Israelis put up barriers like this to keep people who throw stones from escaping down side streets...
J. SACCO 4-94
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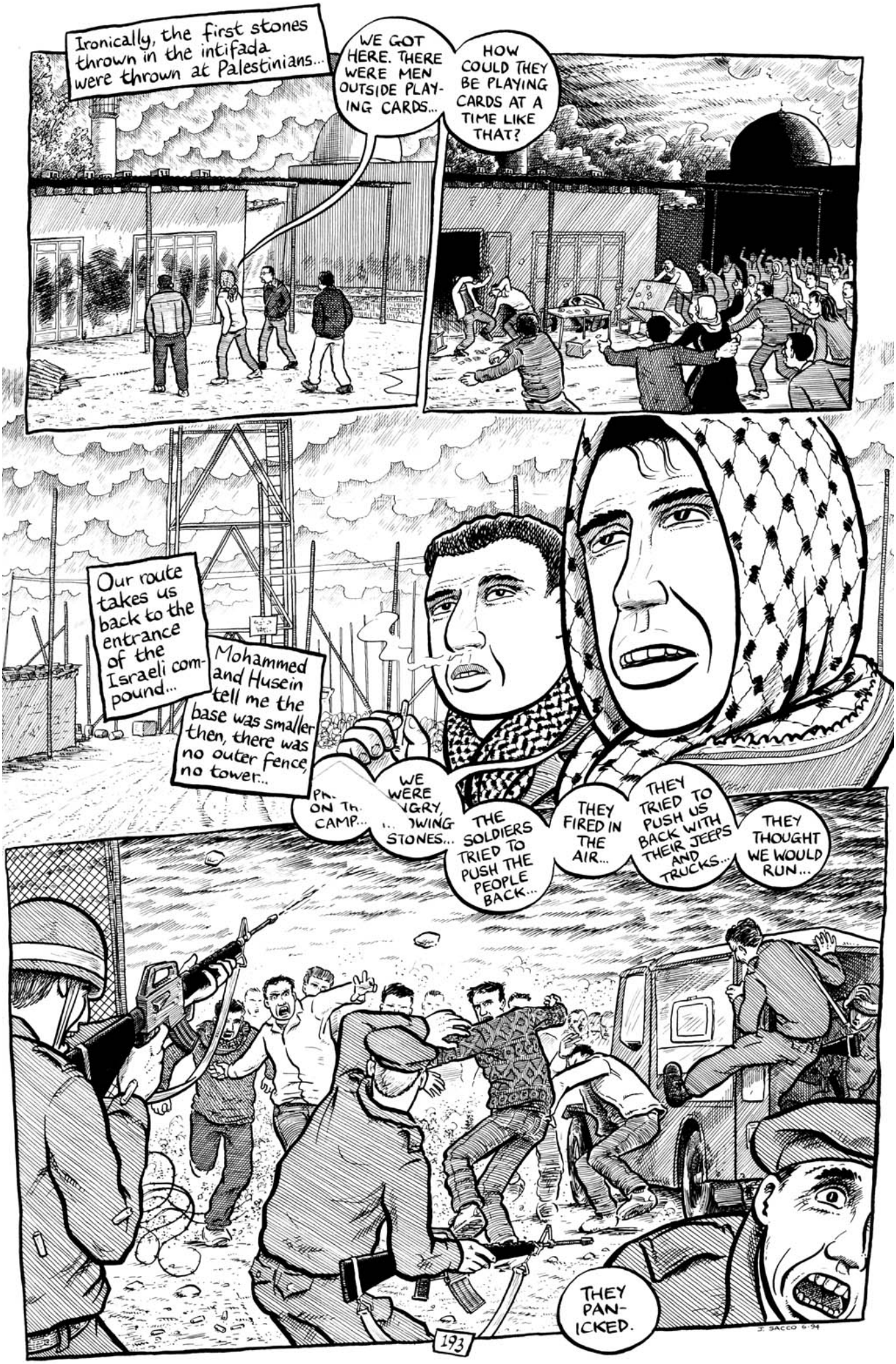
Ironically, the first stones thrown in the intifada were thrown at Palestinians...
WE GOT HERE. THERE WERE MEN OUTSIDE PLAYING CARDS...
HOW COULD THEY BE PLAYING CARDS AT A TIME LIKE THAT?
Our route takes us back to the entrance of the Israeli compound...
Mohammed and Husein tell me the base was smaller then, there was no outer fence, no tower...
ON TH... CAMP...
WE WERE ...NGRY, ...OWING STONES...
THE SOLDIERS TRIED TO PUSH THE PEOPLE BACK...
THEY FIRED IN THE AIR...
THEY TRIED TO PUSH US BACK WITH THEIR JEEPS AND TRUCKS...
THEY THOUGHT WE WOULD RUN...
THEY PANICKED.
J. SACCO 6-94
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Mohammed and Husein tell me the demonstrations spread to other parts of the camp, the side streets, the big spaces...
clashes continued till past midnight...
THE NEXT DAY, THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS MARCHED AROUND THE CAMP AFTER CLASS...
MANY PEOPLE JOINED...
THE PEOPLE GATHERED IN AN OPEN SPACE...
CLASHES BROKE OUT...
THE SOLDIERS FIRED INTO THE CROWD...
WHEN SOMEONE FELL, THEY THOUGHT WE WOULD RUN...
BUT WE PRESSED AHEAD...
his name was Hatem Sissi...
the first of hundreds...
THE CROWD TOOK UP HIS BODY AND CARRIED HIM AROUND THE CAMP...
THE SOLDIERS TRIED TO REACH HIM, BUT WE KEPT THEM AWAY WITH STONES...
THE CAMP WAS LIKE A WAR ZONE FOR A WEEK.
within a couple of days fighting had spread to the rest of Gaza and the West Bank...
the intifada had begun...

THE BOYS PART TWO
Later, sitting around with Mohammed, Husein, and a few others, I ask what had changed those first few days of the intifada...
BEFORE THE INTIFADA WE HAD THE IDEA THAT ISRAEL HAD ALL THE POWER, THAT THERE WAS NO WAY WE COULD PUSH THEM OUT...
WE WERE AFRAID OF THE SOLDIERS, WE FELT THEY WERE LIKE SUPERMAN... BUT THEN WE SAW THEY WERE AFRAID OF STONES.
WHY DO YOU THROW STONES? WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO?
WE KNOW WHEN WE THROW STONES WE DON'T HAVE MUCH CHANCE OF INJURING THE SOLDIERS... BUT THERE IS SOMETHING INSIDE US... WE HAVE TO SHOW WHAT IS INSIDE US.
NOW, REALLY, IT'S BECOME A HABIT TO US.
AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF GOING TO PRISON AGAIN?
IT'S NOT IMPORTANT IF WE GO TO PRISON OR NOT. THIS IS A PRISON FOR US.
I'VE NEVER BEEN TO PRISON. EVERYONE ELSE HAS BEEN TO PRISON.
T. SACCO © 94
When we're on our own, Sameh shakes his head...
YOU HEARD MOHAMMED SAY HE'S NEVER BEEN TO PRIS-ON?
THAT EMBAR-RASSES HIM.

THE BOYS
PART THREE
Firas is 15 years old and works for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of the resistance groups that began influencing the uprising within weeks of the initial unrest...
WHY ARE YOU INVOLVED IN THE INTIFADA?
FOR ME IT IS A WAY OF TAKING BACK MY COUNTRY, TO BE FREE OF THE OCCUPATION, TO LET THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD KNOW ABOUT US...
I SEE HOW THE SOLDIERS TREAT MY PARENTS. THEY BEAT MY BROTHERS. ONE OF MY BROTHERS IN JAIL...
HOW WERE YOU RECRUITED BY THE POPULAR FRONT?
"My neighbor came to me... He asked about my politics, whether I agreed with the policies of Hamas or the other groups. He left me for a couple of days. He was examining me, seeing who my friends are, where I'd go...
"When he decided I might be the right man, he asked whether I wanted to work with the Popular Front. He said I should consider it if I cared about myself and my country, about our problems here and the life we live. I said I'd think about it. He didn't force me. I sat with him and some others six times before deciding. Other groups approached me, but I'd already decided on the Popular Front...
HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU DECIDED?
I WAS 13.

"From 13 to 15 you work with them in a general way. You spray paint slogans on the wall and give out leaflets. At 16 years old, if you agree, you become a member. They register your name..."
YOU GO FROM WRITING ON THE WALLS TO OTHER THINGS.
WHAT SORT OF THINGS?
LIKE GIVING WARNINGS TO COLLABORATORS. YOU WARN THEM TWO TIMES. THE THIRD TIME, YOU BEAT THEM.
DO YOU HAVE FRIENDS IN THE OTHER FACTIONS?
I STAY IN MY GROUP. THERE'S A PROBLEM BETWEEN FATEH AND THE POPULAR FRONT, BETWEEN FATEH AND HAMAS, PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF THE PEACE PROCESS. FATEH AGREES WITH IT, THE POPULAR FRONT DOESN'T...
DO THE FACTIONS EVER FIGHT?
"Yes, for example, one time some Fateh supporters came outside and chanted, 'We are with the PLO! We agree with the Madrid talks!' Popular Front supporters started yelling against the talks. They beat each other with sticks... and fought with knives... 150-200 people were involved. Some people were hurt..."
J. SACCO '94
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I DON'T LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT, AND I HOPE ONE DAY FATEH WILL UNDERSTAND THAT THIS PEACE PROCESS GIVES US NOTHING, ISRAEL WILL GET WHAT IT WANTS. WE HOPE ONE DAY TO CO-ORDINATE WITH FATEH AND CONTINUE OUR STRUGGLE.
DO YOU THINK OF OTHER THINGS BESIDES THE INTIFADA?
I NEVER THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE, JUST THE POLITICAL.
WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL?
"In the morning, if I go in the streets and see the soldiers, I'll fight them. I won't go to school."
WHAT ARE YOUR EXPERIENCES FIGHTING THE SOLDIERS
ONCE I WAS SHOT, AND I HAVE BEEN ARRESTED THREE TIMES...
"Once when I was arrested, they tied us, covered our eyes, and beat us. I'm not 16 yet... and so I don't have to go to jail if my parents pay a $300 fine..."
DO YOUR PARENTS DISCOURAGE YOU FROM THROWING STONES?
MY PARENTS SAY I'M DOING A GOOD THING.
WHAT HAPPENED THE TIME YOU WERE SHOT?

"I was with a lot of young people.
"The soldiers came and we ran away.
"I was shot in the back.
"My friends, the others, they threw stones to keep the soldiers from taking me to prison.
"At that moment, an ambulance came and took me to hospital.
J. SACCO 7.94
"They put me in a room. We were 12 patients, intifada cases.
"The soldiers and Shin Bet came to find out who had been shot that day.
"They were asking our names, beating us, calling us dogs. They said, 'George Habash is a dog! Your mother is a whore!'
"If they know our names, they can arrest us. My parents would have to pay the fine to keep me out of prison...
"So I didn't answer...
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"Five soldiers took me from my bed and threw me to the ground... The fall broke my arm...
When they saw me clutching my arm, they started kicking it... Doctors and nurses tried to stop
them, but they were pushed away... The soldiers broke the arm of a hospital employee, too...
J. SACCO © 94

I couldn't count how many times I was beaten... Blood was coming from my mouth
and nose... They broke a tooth..."
AFTER TWO DAYS I REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS...
THE SOLDIERS CAME AGAIN, BUT SOME U.N. AND RED CROSS PEOPLE WERE THERE, AND THEY COULDN'T BEAT ME.
The interview concluded, Sameh and I sit around discussing Firas and kids his age...
OUR LEADERSHIP HAS KEPT THE YOUTH CLUBS CLOSED. THE KIDS DON'T PLAY FOOTBALL, AND THEIR OTHER INTERESTS ARE CUT OFF...
ALL THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO THINK ABOUT IS THE STRUGGLE. THEY SING SONGS ABOUT THE INTIFADA, EVEN IN SCHOOL...
ALSO, THE SOLDIERS WON'T LET ANYONE ALONE. THEY'RE ALWAYS STOPPING YOU, ASKING YOU QUESTIONS... AND EVERY HOME HERE HAS SOMEONE WHO IS IMPRISONED, WHO HAS DIED, WHO IS WOUNDED...
THIS IS THE CHILDHOOD?
J SACCO 7.94

THE BOYS

PART FOUR

"I tried to get up, but I couldn't...
"They dragged me by the legs to the main street, about 50 meters. My intestines were hanging out...
"They took me to a car. They were arguing whether they should leave me to die or not..."
J. SACCO '94
JUST THEN A U.N. AMBULANCE CAME BY CHANCE. IT TOOK ME TO AL-SHIFA HOSPITAL IN GAZA TOWN...
THEY MADE AN IMMEDIATE OPERATION. I WAS THERE TWO WEEKS...
THEN THE RED CROSS TOOK ME TO AL-MAKASSAD HOSPITAL IN JERUSALEM BECAUSE OF MY HIGH FEVER...
THEY MADE ANOTHER OPERATION ON MY BACK. I WAS THERE FOR ONE MONTH...
BEFORE THE OPERATION I COULDN'T MOVE EITHER LEG...
I CAN MOVE MY LEFT LEG NOW, BUT NOT LIKE I USED TO...
I'M INVOLVED IN PHYSIOTHERAPY...
BEFORE, I USED TO WORK... NOW I CAN'T...

I'm listening to him, thinking back to an interview I had a couple of weeks back with the head of the YMCA Rehabilitation Programme in East Jerusalem...
His organization works with young, wounded Palestinians...
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH THE GREAT NUMBER OF INJURED? IF WE GET A STATE, HOW WILL WE DEAL WITH THEM?
DO WE COMPENSATE THEM FOR WOUNDS THEY RECEIVED IN THE INTIFADA?
One of his chief concerns is integrating seriously injured youths back into the community...
THERE'S ONE GIRL, SHE'S 14 YEARS OLD, A BULLET PUT OUT HER EYE...
FOR TEN DAYS AFTERWARDS SHE DIDN'T TALK TO ANYONE...
HER MOTHER WAS WORRIED THAT THE DISFIGUREMENT WOULD END THE GIRL'S PROSPECTS FOR MARRIAGE...
WE HAD TO VISIT THE MOTHER TO CALM HER, SO SHE WOULDN'T MAKE HER DAUGHTER LOSE HEART...

WITH INJURED BOYS THE MAIN PROBLEM IS AT FIRST THEY FEEL LIKE HEROES — THEY'VE DONE SOMETHING FOR THEIR COUNTRY... BUT WHEN A BOY STARTS LIVING WITH HIS INJURY, HE MIGHT NOT FEEL THE SUPPORT OF OTHERS...
I'm wondering about that... this kid was shot two years ago, plenty of time for the reality of his injury to have sunk in... So I ask:
HOW DO YOU FIT IN THE COMMUNITY NOW THAT YOU'RE PARTIALLY PARALYZED?
WE RESPECT YOU.
THEY RESPECT ME.
I'M SURE THEY RESPECT HIM...
BUT WITH ALL THOSE PEOPLE LISTENING IN, WHAT ELSE COULD HE SAY?

Sameh and I are at the rehab center, in the middle of tea and a chat, when a woman walks in with her kid...
the child is mentally retarded...
the woman wants to find him a school...
is there room for him in the deaf class?
Sameh explains it'd do the boy no good to be in with deaf kids...
the mother and child leave...
HANDICAPPED

The fact is, Sameh tells me, only five people in Gaza work in the field of special education, and none have specialized training...Here in Jabalia, he says, there are 1,200 handicapped people, and little money to do anything for them...
The rehabilitation center tries to provide lunch and help with clothes for the deaf students...
"But there's no real budget," says Sameh. "It's hard to plan. The country is poor..."
and hearing aids cost hundreds of dollars each...

The center doesn't have the resources, but there's no end of ideas to help the kids...
WE ARE COORDINATING WITH UNRWA TO ACCEPT THE CLEVER ONES IN THE NORMAL SCHOOLS. THEY'VE AGREED TO DO THIS...
FOR THOSE WITHOUT THE ABILITY, WE WANT TO START A VOCATIONAL PROGRAM... WE WANT TO ARRANGE WORK WITH EMPLOYERS IN THE COMMUNITY...
ALSO, WE HAVE TO EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THE HANDICAPPED. WE HAVE TO CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDES. A GOOD WAY IS TO SHOW BY EXAMPLE: HERE IS A HANDICAPPED PERSON, SEE WHAT HE CAN DO...
J SACCO P 94

Sameh talks of developing a professional program here, but I've been told that certain of the center's directors owe their positions not to professional qualifications, but to factional loyalties... Fateh, this source said, got involved only after the center had already established itself and now enjoys the PR windfall of association with a successful program while providing little in promised material support...

In addition to those problems, Sameh admits that neither he nor the teachers are professionally trained to work with the handicapped... he wants training... in fact, UNRWA had just nominated him to Bethlehem University for a four-month course that seems right up his alley—Developing Skills for Those Working with Persons with Disabilities...

but Bethlehem is in the West Bank and Sameh lives in Gaza, and travelling back and forth requires Israeli permission...

THEY SAID NO? WHY?

BECAUSE IT'S NOT A PROGRAM AFFILIATED WITH UNRWA...

Still, Sameh dreams about furthering his education...

I'D LIKE TO GO FOR A MASTER'S DEGREE ... I WANT TO STUDY IN EUROPE, WHERE THEY HAVE A HUMANE UNDERSTANDING OF THE HANDICAPPED...

I WANT TO GET ANOTHER NATIONALITY SO I CAN TRAVEL ABROAD FREELY AND COME AND WORK IN PALESTINE WITH NO PROBLEM...

But it's the Israelis who'll decide whether Sameh can travel or not... and, in any case, the center doesn't have the money to send someone abroad for two or three years...

Hell, the center can't even afford a wage for him or its six teachers... they get nothing for full-time work...

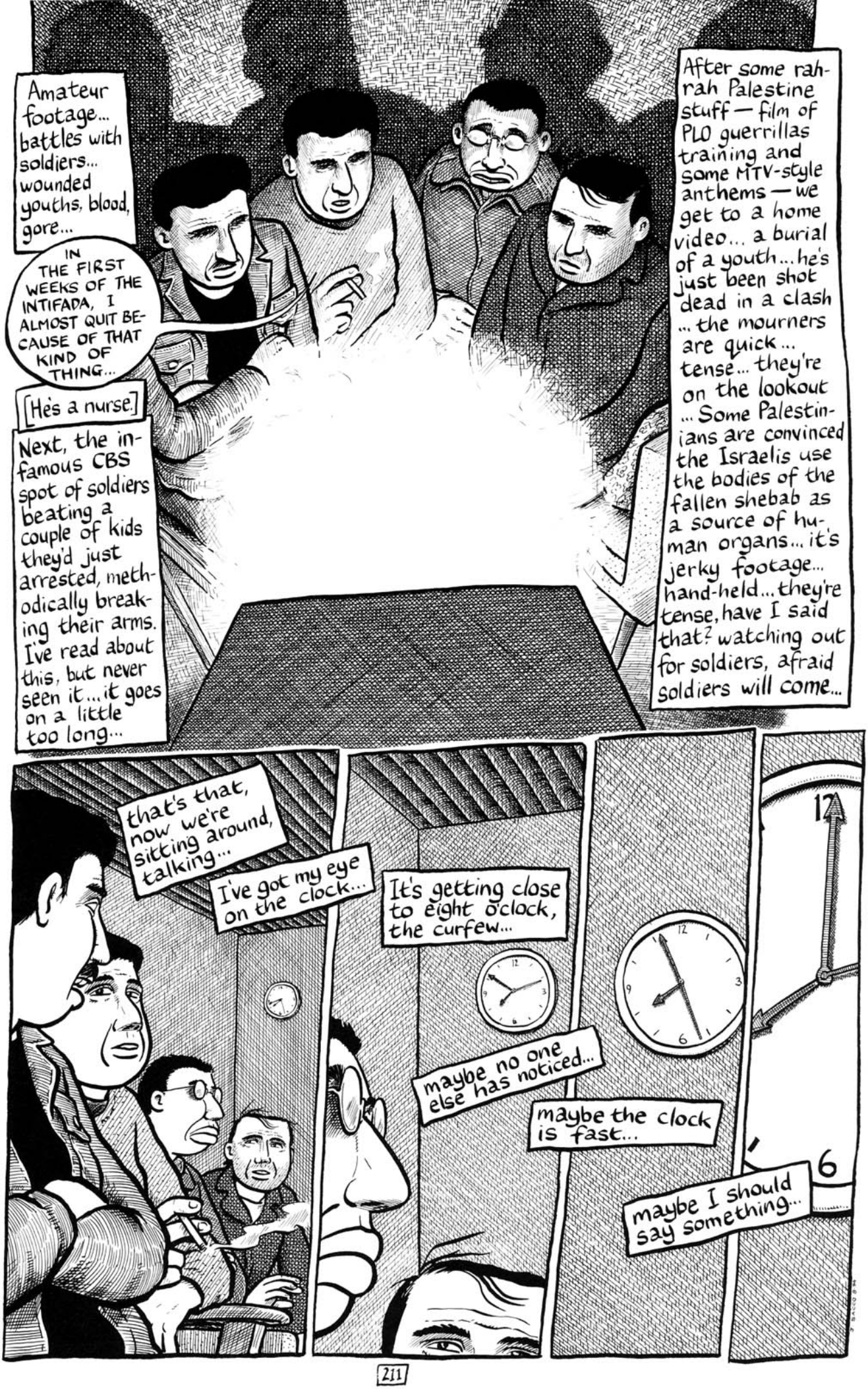
Meanwhile, the $5,000 Sameh saved while teaching in Yemen is about to run out...

then what?

I'm blinking fast, snapping mental pictures and thinking, "This'll make a great couple of pages in the comic" —a weird scene of a pitching car with the rain going torrential while Sameh strains to see over his shoulder into the dark and fumbles with the gears to back us out of another washed-out path... and that's me next to him and this is my happiest moment... I've made it, you understand, I've come hundreds of miles via planes and buses and taxis to be precisely here: Jabalia, the must-see refugee camp of the Gaza Strip, the intifada's ground zero, a Disneyland of refuse and squalor... and here I am, brushing up against the Palestinian experience, a goddamn adventure cartoonist who hasn't changed his clothes in days, who's stepped over a few dead rats and shivered from the cold, who's bullshitted with the boys and nodded knowingly at their horrible narratives... and I'm pinching myself in a car in the dark in a flood, giddy from the ferocity outside, thinking, "Throw it at me, baby, I can take it," but I've got the window rolled up tight...

and what a hassle to track it down! The first place we tried had just been raided by soldiers... a good thing the video hadn't been there...
then we got sent to a house on the dark side of the camp...
After three days the lights have finally come back on in Sameh's area, but not out here...
I DON'T LIKE THIS
Anyway, we've picked up the video, it's on my lap...
I DON'T LIKE THIS
WOOPS!
not this way!
not this way either! ...wouldn't wish that crater on a Sherman tank!
209

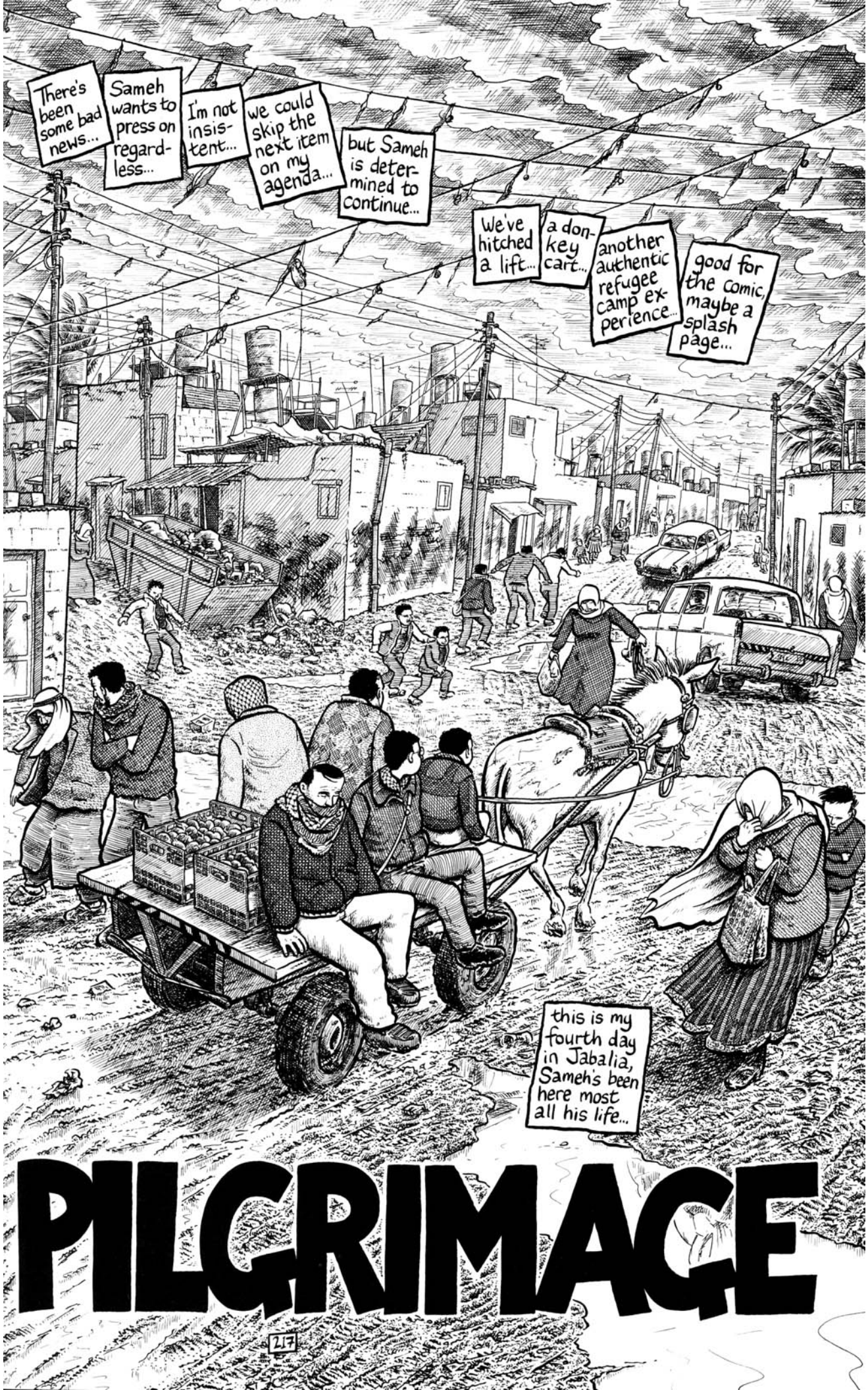
Finally we park...
this way
watch your step
Now we're sitting in a home with a couple of Sameh's friends, warming up on tea...
I love hanging out with the guys in Palestine, making gritty and matter-of-fact inquiries about beatings and bruises and what have you...
Ansar III? Sure, they've both done time...
Interrogated? (I'm always in the market for an interrogation story.)
FORGIVE ME, I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT...
THE LAST TIME I SHOWED A JOURNALIST AROUND, I SPENT TWO YEARS IN PRISON...
okay, let's skip it...
let's sit back and watch the video...
210

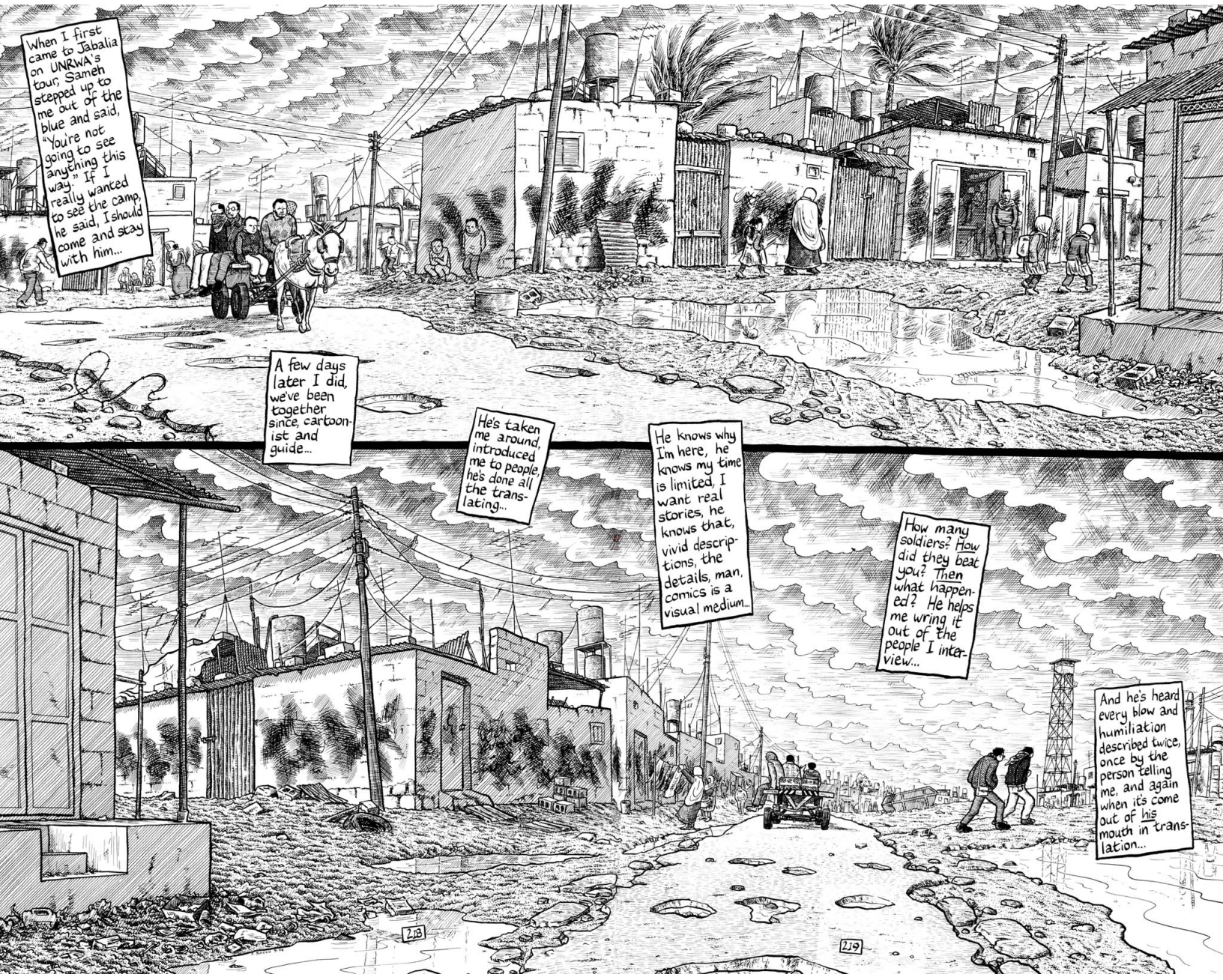

Amateur footage... battles with soldiers... wounded youths, blood, gore...
IN THE FIRST WEEKS OF THE INTIFADA, I ALMOST QUIT BECAUSE OF THAT KIND OF THING...
[He's a nurse.]
Next, the infamous CBS spot of soldiers beating a couple of kids they'd just arrested, methodically breaking their arms. I've read about this, but never seen it... it goes on a little too long...
After some rah-rah Palestine stuff — film of PLO guerrillas training and some MTV-style anthems — we get to a home video... a burial of a youth... he's just been shot dead in a clash ... the mourners are quick... tense... they're on the lookout ... Some Palestinians are convinced the Israelis use the bodies of the fallen shebab as a source of human organs... it's jerky footage... hand-held... they're tense, have I said that? watching out for soldiers, afraid soldiers will come...
that's that, now we're sitting around, talking...
I've got my eye on the clock...
It's getting close to eight o'clock, the curfew...
maybe no one else has noticed...
maybe the clock is fast...
maybe I should say something...
12
6

Finally we're out of there, but not soon enough for me...
Past curfew, so no driving, we go on foot...
I can't see a goddamn thing...
HERE, YOU TAKE THE VIDEO.
IF THE SOLDIERS FIND US, IT'S BETTER YOU SHOULD HAVE IT.
oh, great! if the soldiers find us?
I'll tell you what happens if the soldiers find us! the video gets the toss! the nearest goddamn puddle!
I mean, this is all well and good for Sameh... he's used to this sort of thing...
Me, personally, I don't go breaking Israeli curfews left and right...
One could be mistaken for a Palestinian out here...
Was that voices?
Palestinians?
I think they were Palestinians...
212

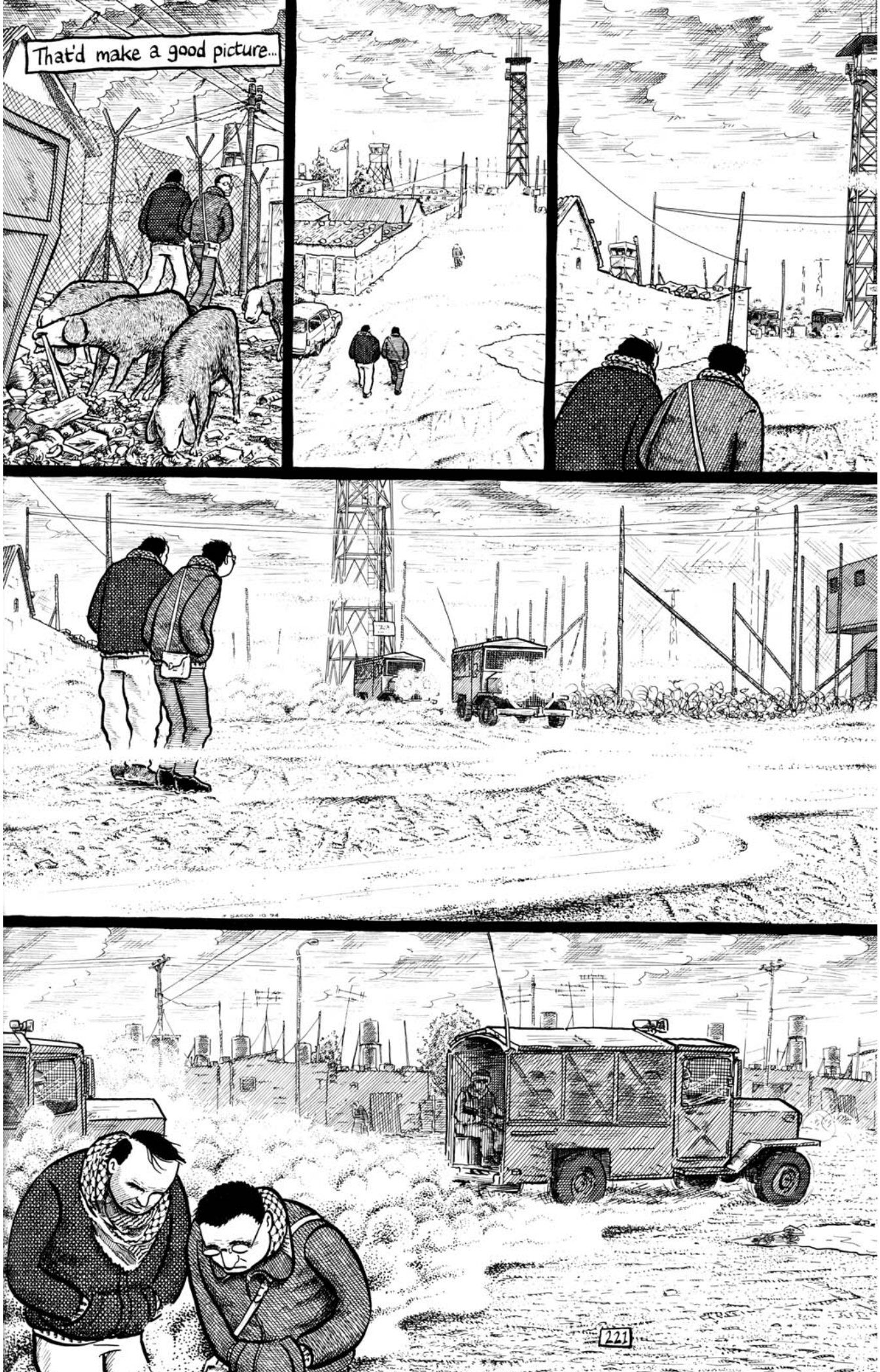
Early the next morning, Sameh heads off to the center. I usually go with him, but not today. I tell him I want to sleep in, I tell him I want to catch up on my journal...
Later, Sameh's brother and his pal stop by to see if I want to watch the video again. I can count my Arabic on my fingers and toes, I can't explain I'd rather not...
We watch the video over lunch, tea, and sweets...
...the wounds and blood, the arm-snapping, they're easier to stomach the second time around...
at the burial, the mourners are still tense and on the lookout, but I'm not going to worry, I've seen this before, the soldiers won't come...
that's the good thing about video, you can rewind it, watch it over, eliminate all surprises... it's easier on your nerves, you can sip tea, you've seen it before, you know the soldiers won't come... guaranteed.
step outside, however, in present time, and all bets are off...
J. SACCO 8-94

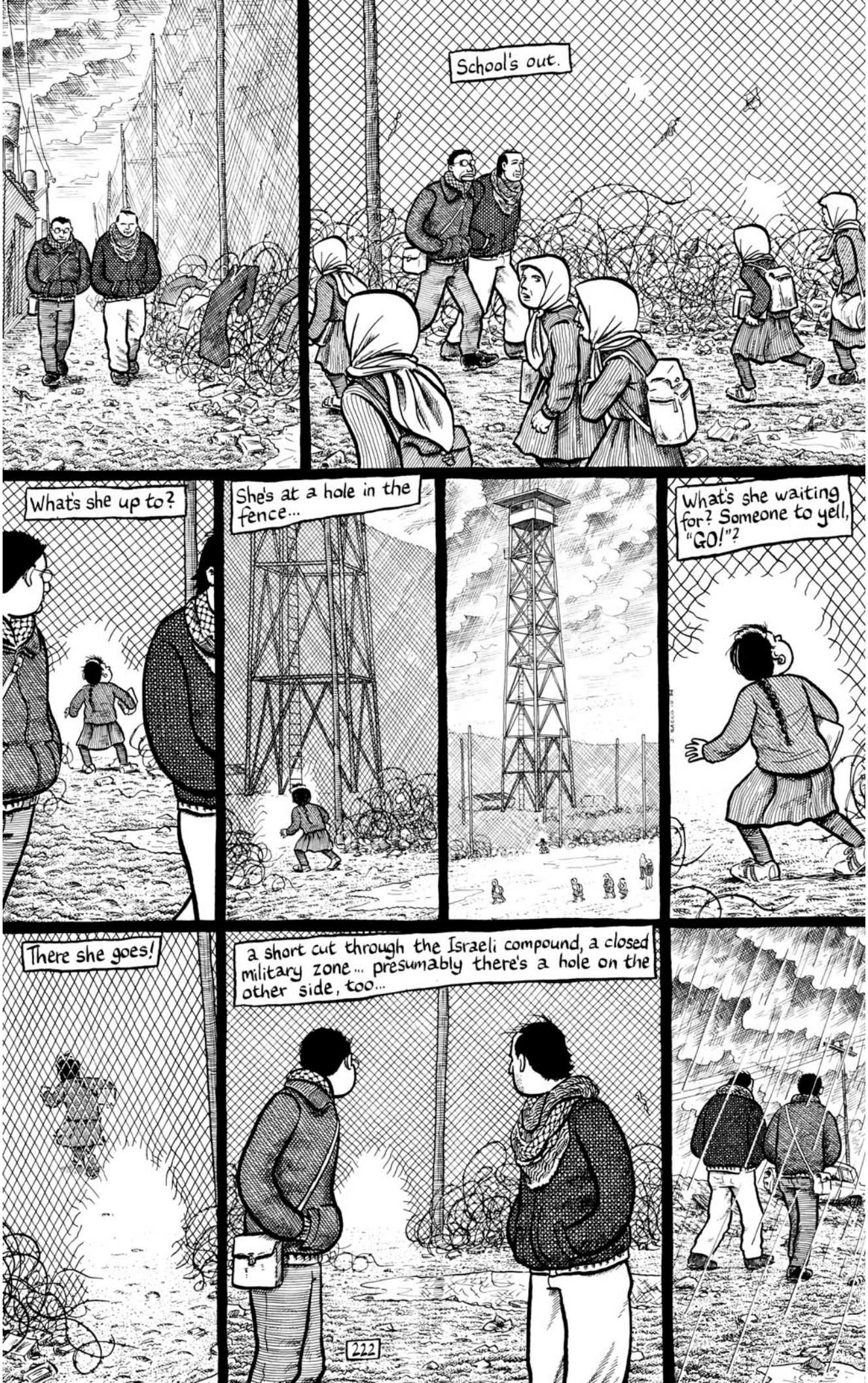
Chapter Eight


There's been some bad news...
Sameh wants to press on regard-less...
I'm not insis-tent...
we could skip the next item on my agenda...
but Sameh is deter-mined to continue...
We've hitched a lift...
a don-key cart...
another authentic refugee camp ex-perience...
good for the comic, maybe a splash page...
this is my fourth day in Jabalia, Sameh's been here most all his life...
PILGRIMAGE


When I first came to Jabalia on UNRWA's tour, Sameh stepped up to me out of the blue and said, "You're not going to see anything this way." If I really wanted to see the camp, he said, I should come and stay with him...
A few days later I did, we've been together since, cartoonist and guide...
He's taken me around, introduced me to people, he's done all the translating...
He knows why I'm here, he knows my time is limited, I want real stories, he knows that, vivid descriptions, the details, man, comics is a visual medium...
How many soldiers? How did they beat you? Then what happened? He helps me wring it out of the people I interview...
And he's heard every blow and humiliation described twice, once by the person telling me, and again when it's come out of his mouth in translation...
218
219

Today a memo was circulated at the rehabilitation center where Sameh works as a social worker...
—no more friends to hang out at the office; no more serving friends tea; no more leaving early to show friends around the camp...
Also, Sameh's been informed he might be demoted...
It's an office politics thing, these things happen everywhere. Probably it's been brewing for some time...
But my presence has been the catalyst...
Well, think how I feel about it...
220


That'd make a good picture...

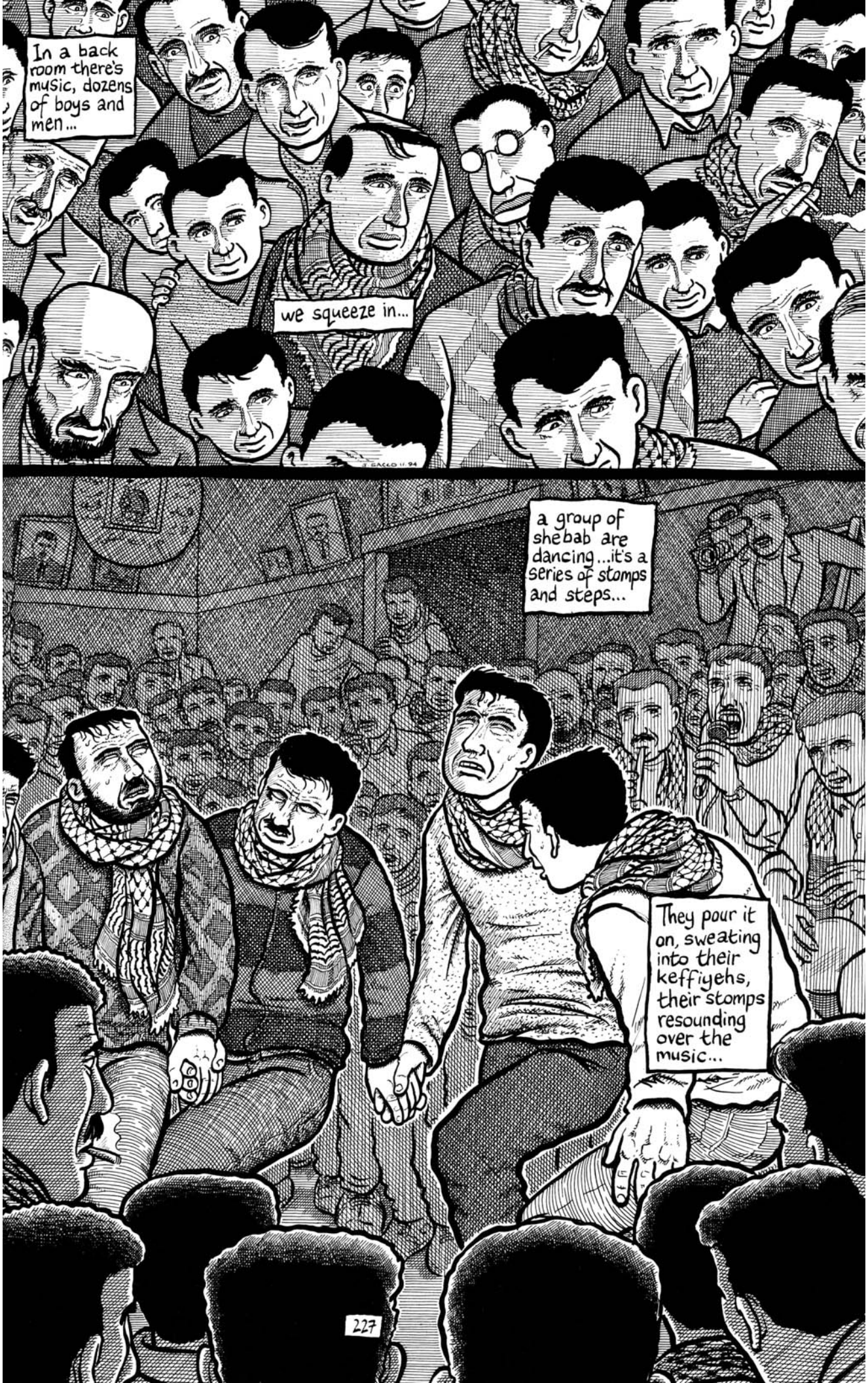

School's out.
What's she up to?
She's at a hole in the fence...
What's she waiting for? Someone to yell, "GO!"?
There she goes!
a short cut through the Israeli compound, a closed military zone... presumably there's a hole on the other side, too...

They don't know where it is.
These kids say they know.
There it is...
The grave of Hatem Sissi, the first person killed in the intifada...
Political slogans have been written on the grave in his blood and lacquered over.

Picture time.
Sameh shoos the kids out of the way. I want the kids in the photo, but anyway...
That's that.
We have an appointment...
...a second interview with an old man, he escaped to Gaza in 1948...
The old man begins, putting himself back in time, and the first words Sameh translates are:
THE JEWS, THEY USED TO KILL THE YOUTH. I WAS 22 YEARS OLD.
224

"The British authorities gave them guns. For us, we had no right to have guns. When the Jews attacked a Palestinian village in the night... we couldn't do anything about it...
"The Jews came at night and demolished houses while people were sleeping in them...
"They used to put bombs in the farms, landmines. I saw people killed in this way...
"A Jewish settlement was bombed and 15 people were killed...
"At that time we had to sell our clothes to buy guns. We asked the British authorities to give us guns, but they gave us just four...
"They used to come with guns, the Irgun,* and blindfold people and take them... Many people were kidnapped... including my brother-in-law...
*IRGUN - a radical Zionist paramilitary group led by future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.
"The Jews came and occupied the village and arrested everyone left behind including my father, who was an old man and couldn't move...
"I walked with my wife, who was pregnant, for four days... The Egyptian army refused to take us in trucks...
"The Jews bombed us... Even the ants ran after us..."
IT WAS A BLACK DAY WHEN I LEFT MY LAND.
225

The old man talked for a long time, and I think we've missed our next appointment with a former PLO guerrilla...
DO YOU THINK WE'RE TOO LATE?
I THINK WE'RE TOO LATE.
Back at Sameh's, another opportunity comes up. There's someone nearby who's recently escaped Israeli military custody. He's agreed to talk to me. These guys will introduce us...
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
NO, NOT NOW.
MY NEIGHBOR IS GETTING MARRIED TOMORROW AND THERE IS A PARTY TONIGHT.
YOU ARE INVITED.
All right, let's party...
The party is in full swing. Food is being prepared for tomorrow...
22b


In a back room there's music, dozens of boys and men...
we squeeze in...
J. SACCO 11.94
a group of shebab are dancing...it's a series of stomps and steps...
They pour it on, sweating into their keffiyehs, their stomps resounding over the music...
227

When the dancing stops the room erupts! Songs! They're singing like they want to blow the roof off...
Fateh songs! Later, Sameh makes a loose translation: "To all the people who hate us, how sweet to die for Palestine... Fateh does not fear death, and Fateh shall liberate Palestine."
Afterwards, people want to meet me, kids want to practise their English...
HE IS A CLOCK!
HE IS A BANANA!
HE IS A' ORANGE!
The father of the groom welcomes me...
That was his teenaged son, killed by soldiers...
I FEEL A PAIN IN MY HEART FOR THE DEATH OF MY SON, BUT WE MUST CELEBRATE THIS OCCASION...
WE MUST SHOW WE ARE STRONGER THAN THE PAIN.
The party breaks up before the eight o'clock curfew...
SUCH A CELEBRATION IS UNUSUAL.
MORE OR LESS, THEY ARE PROHIBITED BY THE UNIFIED LEADERSHIP.
228

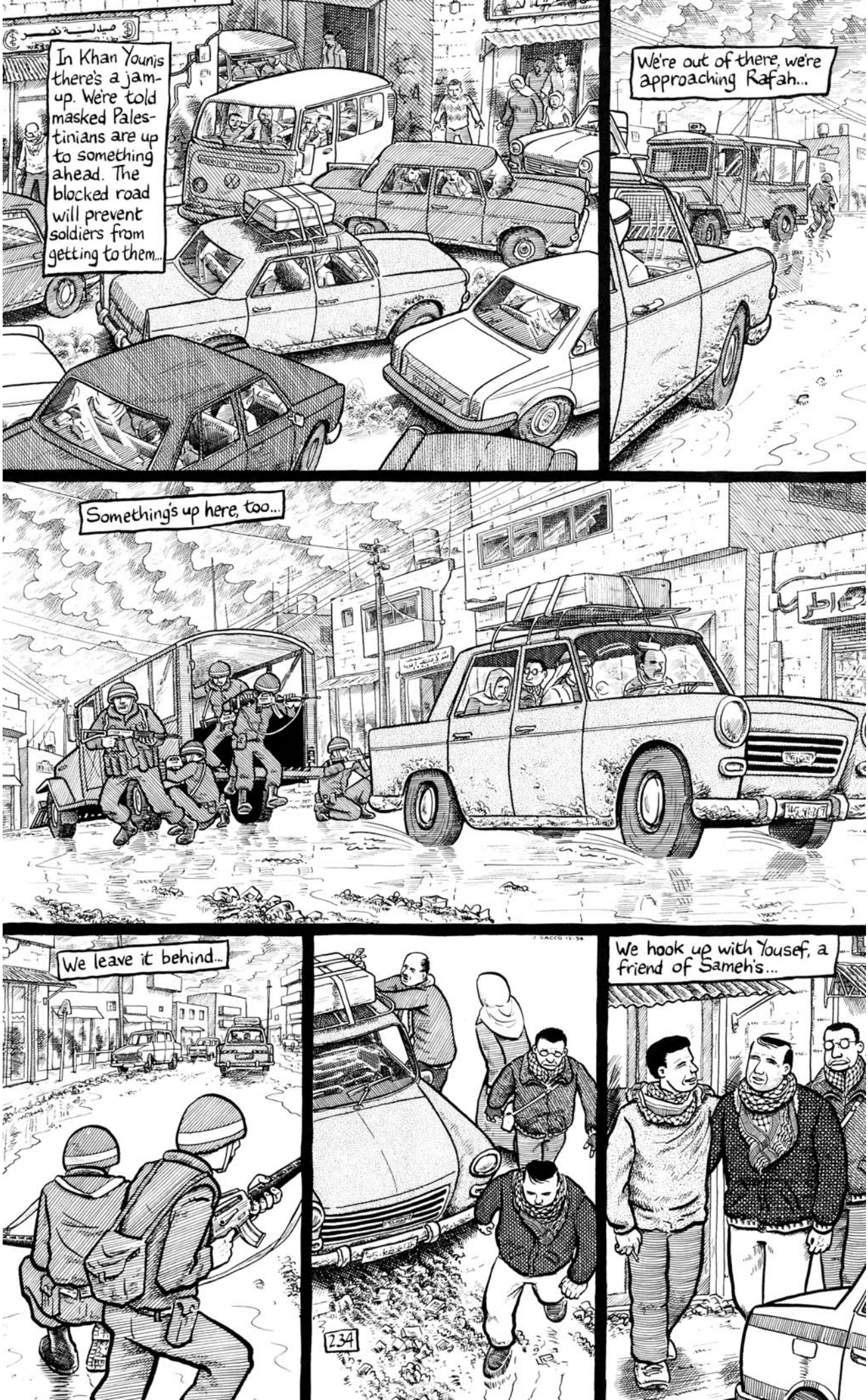
We have an evening to kill and we spend it with Sameh's family—his ill mother, his brother and sister-in-law, a nephew, a niece, an unmarried sister...
His mother talks a little about 1948, but her sentences trail off, tears well up...
THEY THREW US OUT OF OUR HOMES, AND NOW THEY'VE FOLLOWED US HERE...
His nephew is 15 years old and has been shot twice in clashes. But we're tired of talking about clashes...
Sameh's brother is curious...
I WONDER HOW YOU'VE COME TO EAT AND SLEEP HERE. AREN'T YOU AFRAID AFTER ALL YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT US?
The niece is staring at me. She's 10 years old and fascinated. Sameh translates...
WHAT DOES THE WATER TASTE LIKE IN YOUR COUNTRY?
IS IT BETTER WATER HERE OR THERE?
DO THE WOMEN WEAR PANTS OUTSIDE LIKE THEY DO IN EGYPT?
CAN A MAN HAVE TWO WIVES?
DO YOU HAVE THE SOLDIERS AND THE JEWS AND FATEH AND THE POPULAR FRONT IN YOUR COUNTRY?
229

WHEN I WAS IN EGYPT, I SAW SOLDIERS, TOO. DON'T YOU HAVE SOLDIERS IN YOUR COUNTRY?
DO THEY SHOOT THE PEOPLE?
I'VE HEARD CHRISTIANS EAT SNAILS. DO YOU EAT SNAILS? WHICH COUNTRY HAS BETTER FOOD?
WHAT DO THE SOLDIERS DO TO THE PEOPLE IN YOUR COUNTRY?
WHAT ABOUT FEASTS? DO YOU SLAUGHTER LAMBS AND GIVE MEAT TO THE POOR?
WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOM AND DAD? YOU LIVE ALONE? DO YOU HAVE BROTHERS? SISTERS? JUST THE TWO OF YOU? WHAT IS HER NAME?
WHY DON'T YOU HAVE FATEH AND THE POPULAR FRONT IN YOUR COUNTRY?
WHEN WILL YOU LEAVE?
IF HE COMES BACK IN TWO YEARS, YOU'LL BE A WOMAN. WOULD YOU MARRY HIM?
WHY NOT?
I'm still blushing...
I LIKED IT WHEN I ASKED HER WHAT SHE WOULD STUDY IF SHE GOES TO UNIVERSITY AND SHE SAID, "THE FOREIGNER."
A GIRL LIKE THAT... IF I WERE HER PARENTS, I WOULD BUY HER A COMPUTER...
SACCO

It's still raining and hailing in the morning. We can't hear ourselves talk. We wait for it to let up...
WHAT DOES HE SAY?
HE SAYS HIS AREA IS FLOODED AND IT TOOK HIM 30 MINUTES TO GET OUT OF THERE...
HE IS SOAKED UP TO HIS KNEES.

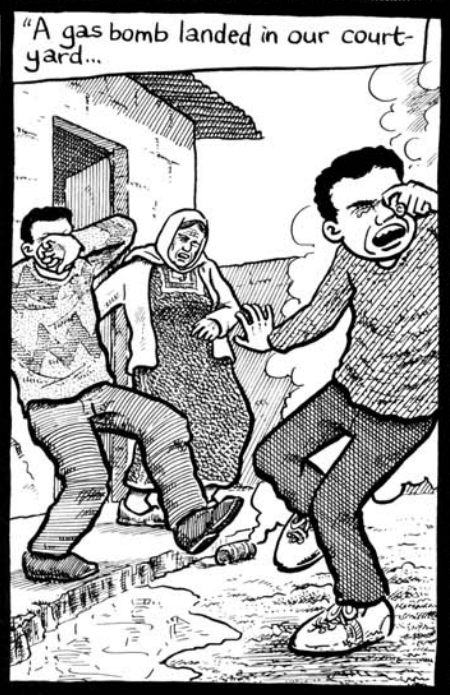
Today we are going to Rafah, on the border with Egypt...
...but our first stop is Gaza Town...
Sameh wants to buy some clothes, maybe a sweater...
232

To get to the shops on the other side of the street, we hop from one pile of refuse to another...
Sameh doesn't find anything he likes...
It's time to go to Rafah...
J. SACCO 12.94
233


In Khan Younis there's a jam-up. We're told masked Palestinians are up to something ahead. The blocked road will prevent soldiers from getting to them...
We're out of there, we're approaching Rafah...
Something's up here, too...
We leave it behind...
J. SACCO 12-94
234
We hook up with Yousef, a friend of Sameh's...

A short car ride later and we're sitting in a home in a refugee camp with a woman and her youngest son... Tea is served, I get my pen out, and we get right to business... Sameh is translating...
WE WERE SITTING HERE WHEN THE SOLDIERS ATTACKED OUR AREA...

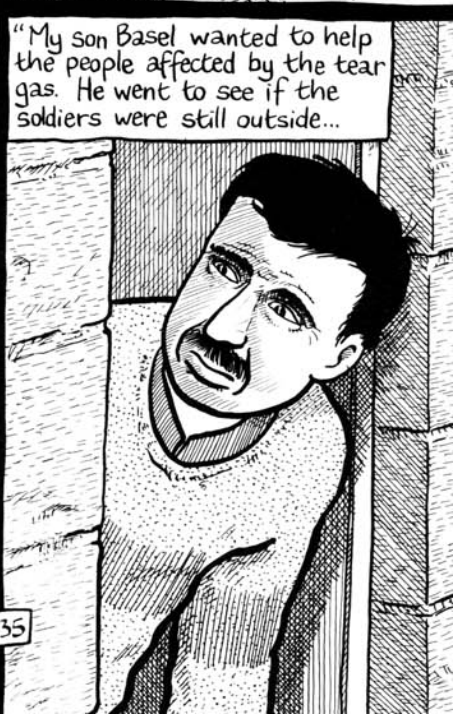
"They were throwing gas... so the children and old people became sick...


"A gas bomb landed in our courtyard...

"The women went out, shouting for help. All the people were running out, gathering... throwing stones at the soldiers...

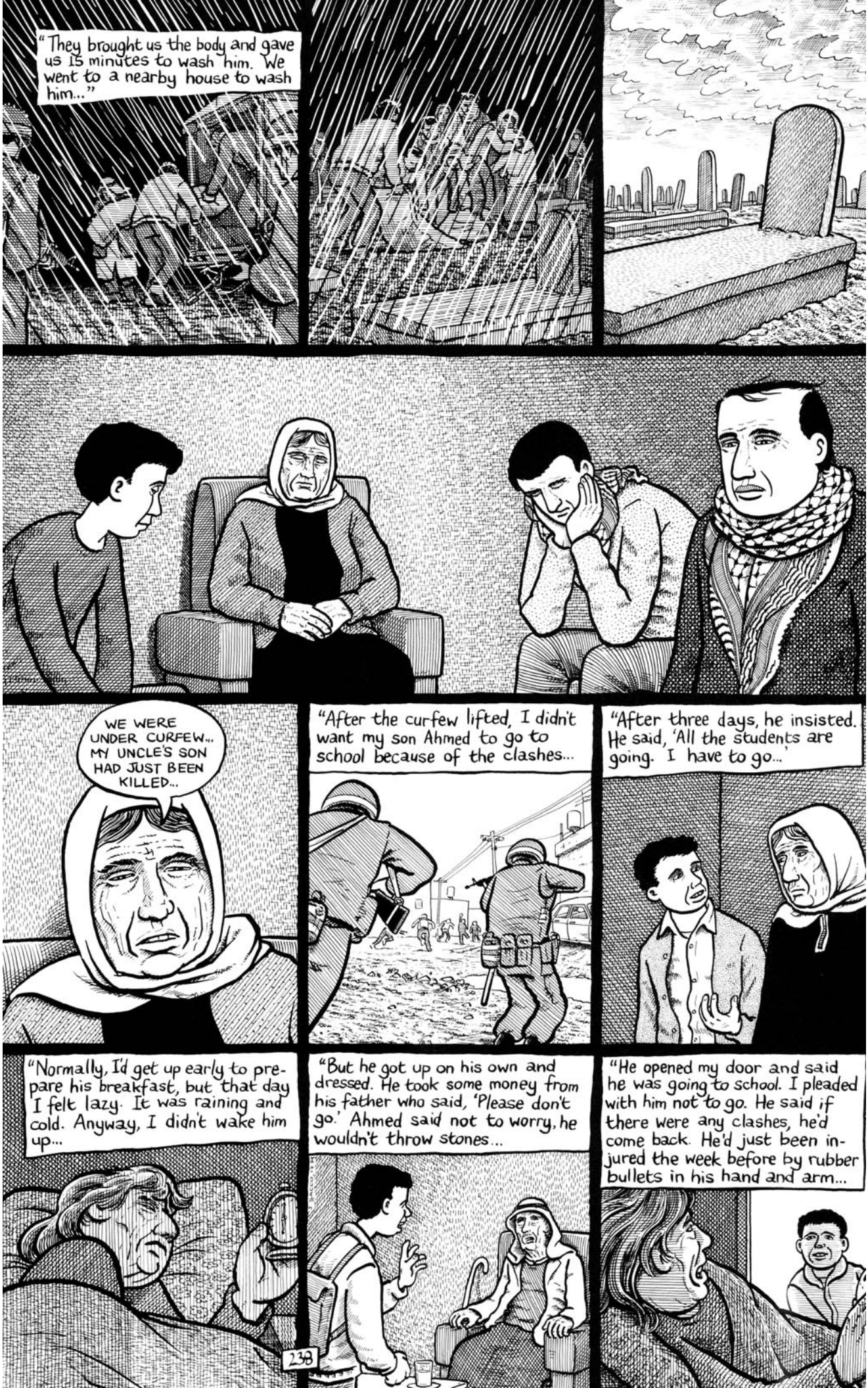
"The youth put up a barricade, including a fridge. They didn't want the jeeps to enter...

"I told my neighbors, 'Why are you staying in your house? The soldiers might be coming to take our sons... We have to stop them...'


"My son Basel wanted to help the people affected by the tear gas. He went to see if the soldiers were still outside...

"A soldier behind the barricade shot him in the head...
"I saw him fall. I was outside. But I didn't know which son it was...
"I ran to him, but the neighbors held me back...
"He was taken to the health center and then to the hospital in Khan Younis...
"We followed him there... The soldiers stopped the car with his father and siblings and started to beat them...
"They forced them to remove a burning tire from the street. They broke my son's arm — the eldest son...
"The soldiers stopped the car I was in, too, and we were beaten...
"One of the soldiers took a stone and threw it at my leg. But I didn't feel it because I wanted to see my son...
"At the hospital in Khan Younis, the doctors said my son would be taken to a hospital in Israel...
"The soldiers refused for him to go in an ambulance. They said they would take him in an aircraft from a settlement near Khan Younis...
"I went with the ambulance to the airport. We reached a checkpoint. The doctors said, 'We have an injured person, we are in a hurry...
236

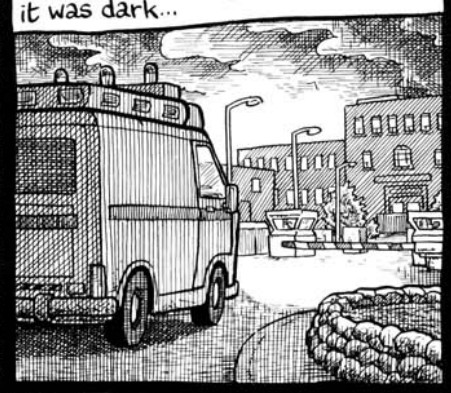
"After half an hour, they let us go... But we didn't find the aircraft...
"We returned to the hospital. They told us to go to another place for the aircraft...
"But it wasn't there either...
"We went back to the hospital. The doctors decided to take him to Israel by ambulance. Why hadn't they taken him directly?
"He was injured at 11a.m. and we didn't get him to the Israeli hospital until 6p.m...
"No doctors, no one came to ask about him. They ignored us...
J. SACCO '12.94
"I couldn't control myself at that time. They took me back to Gaza...
"My son died after 45 hours... He had had no medical care... no change of dressing... just oxygen...
"Forty hours after he died, the soldiers came at night. They said we should go to the cemetery, just the family, at eight o'clock...
"They put a curfew on the camp and many soldiers were positioned around the graves...
"We waited till 1a.m. in the rain...
237


"They brought us the body and gave us 15 minutes to wash him. We went to a nearby house to wash him..."
WE WERE UNDER CURFEW... MY UNCLE'S SON HAD JUST BEEN KILLED...
"After the curfew lifted, I didn't want my son Ahmed to go to school because of the clashes...
"After three days, he insisted. He said, 'All the students are going. I have to go...'
"Normally, I'd get up early to prepare his breakfast, but that day I felt lazy. It was raining and cold. Anyway, I didn't wake him up...
"But he got up on his own and dressed. He took some money from his father who said, 'Please don't go.' Ahmed said not to worry, he wouldn't throw stones...
"He opened my door and said he was going to school. I pleaded with him not to go. He said if there were any clashes, he'd come back. He'd just been injured the week before by rubber bullets in his hand and arm...
238

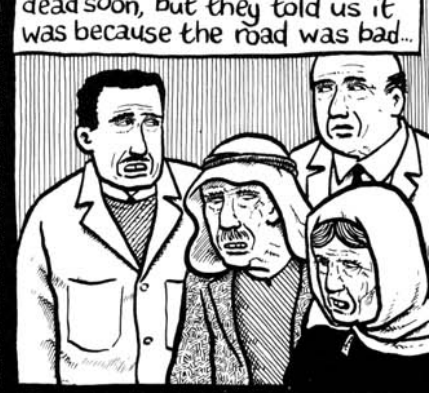
"I got up and went to the market to get some rice for the wake of my uncle's son...
"...People there looked at me strangely. They knew Ahmed had just been shot, but they didn't want to tell me...
"I entered my house but no one was there...
"A neighbor told me four students had been injured in a clash at the school... Two of my sons went to that school...
"I went to my daughter-in-law. She didn't want to tell me anything, and then she started crying. She said, 'Ahmed is injured.'
"We went to the hospital in Khan Younis, but we didn't find him there...
"They told us the soldiers had taken him to an army hospital in Israel. I couldn't control myself. I thought the same thing would happen that happened to my son Basel...
"We left to see him. It took us till 6p.m....
"He had been shot five times... in the forehead, the neck, the arm, the heart, and the cheek. He was still alive...
"We wanted to take him to Al-Makassad hospital in Jerusalem... but they refused...
"I asked again the next day. I went to the director to kiss his feet and hands to let me take my son...

"He told me I had to bring Arab doctors and an ambulance to take him...

"My son, Ahmed's brother, went back to Gaza to get the ambulance and doctors, and they returned when it was dark...

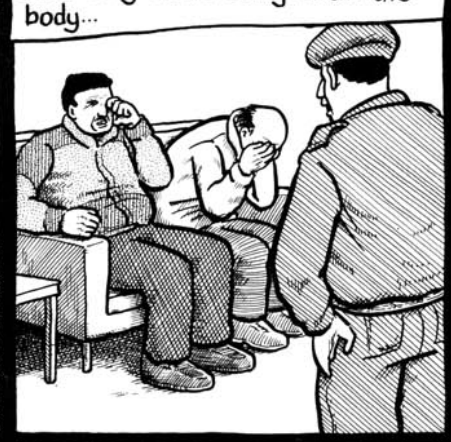


"When the Arab doctors saw him, they advised us not to take him. They knew he would be dead soon, but they told us it was because the road was bad...

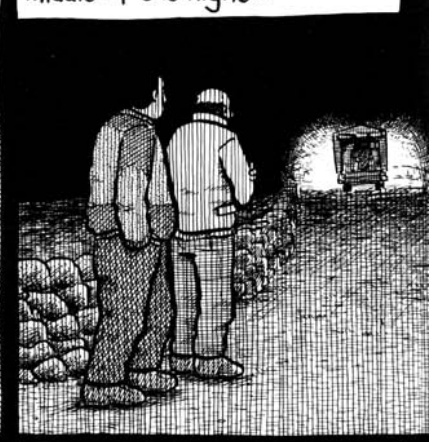


"That night... we left for Gaza. We left two people at the hospital... They slept there...

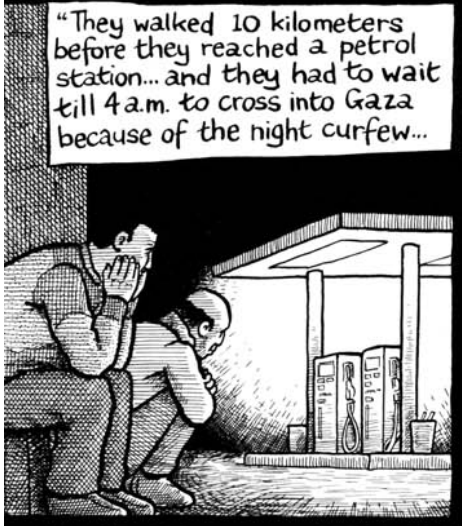
"At 1 a.m. the soldiers woke them to tell them Ahmed had died. They said they would bring them the body...



"But they took them and left them on a road in Israel in the middle of the night...



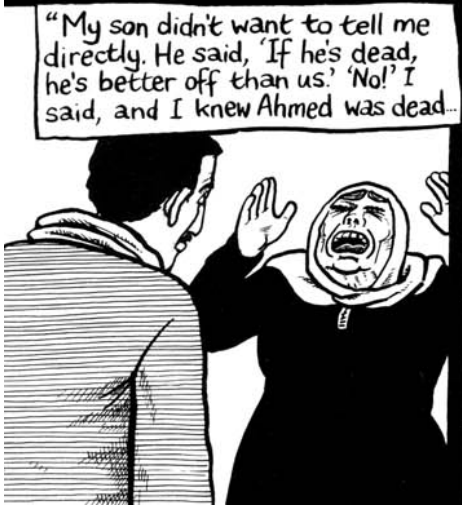
"They walked 10 kilometers before they reached a petrol station... and they had to wait till 4 a.m. to cross into Gaza because of the night curfew...



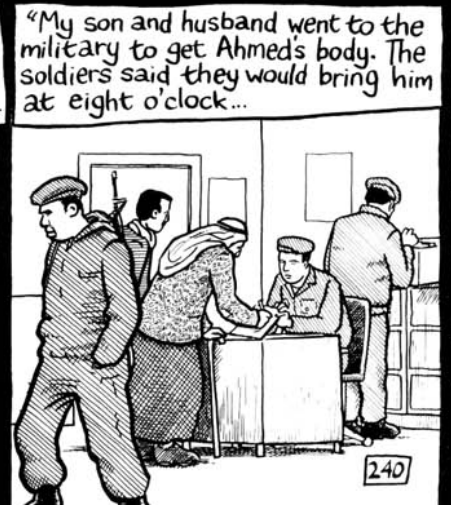
"In Rafah we hadn't received a phone call. The soldiers put a curfew on the town... so how was I going to go to the hospital to see my son?

"The two who had been with Ahmed reached the camp. They told my son, Ahmed's brother...

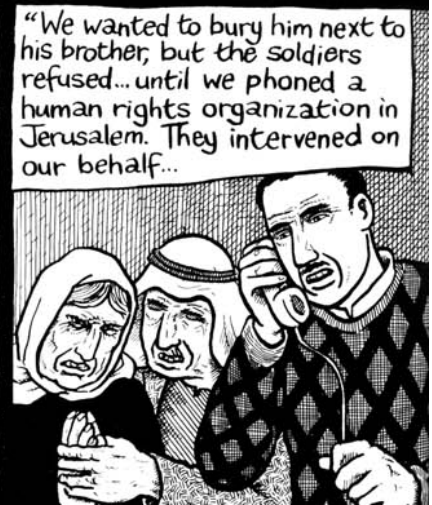
"My son didn't want to tell me directly. He said, 'If he's dead, he's better off than us.' 'No!' I said, and I knew Ahmed was dead...



"My son and husband went to the military to get Ahmed's body. The soldiers said they would bring him at eight o'clock...



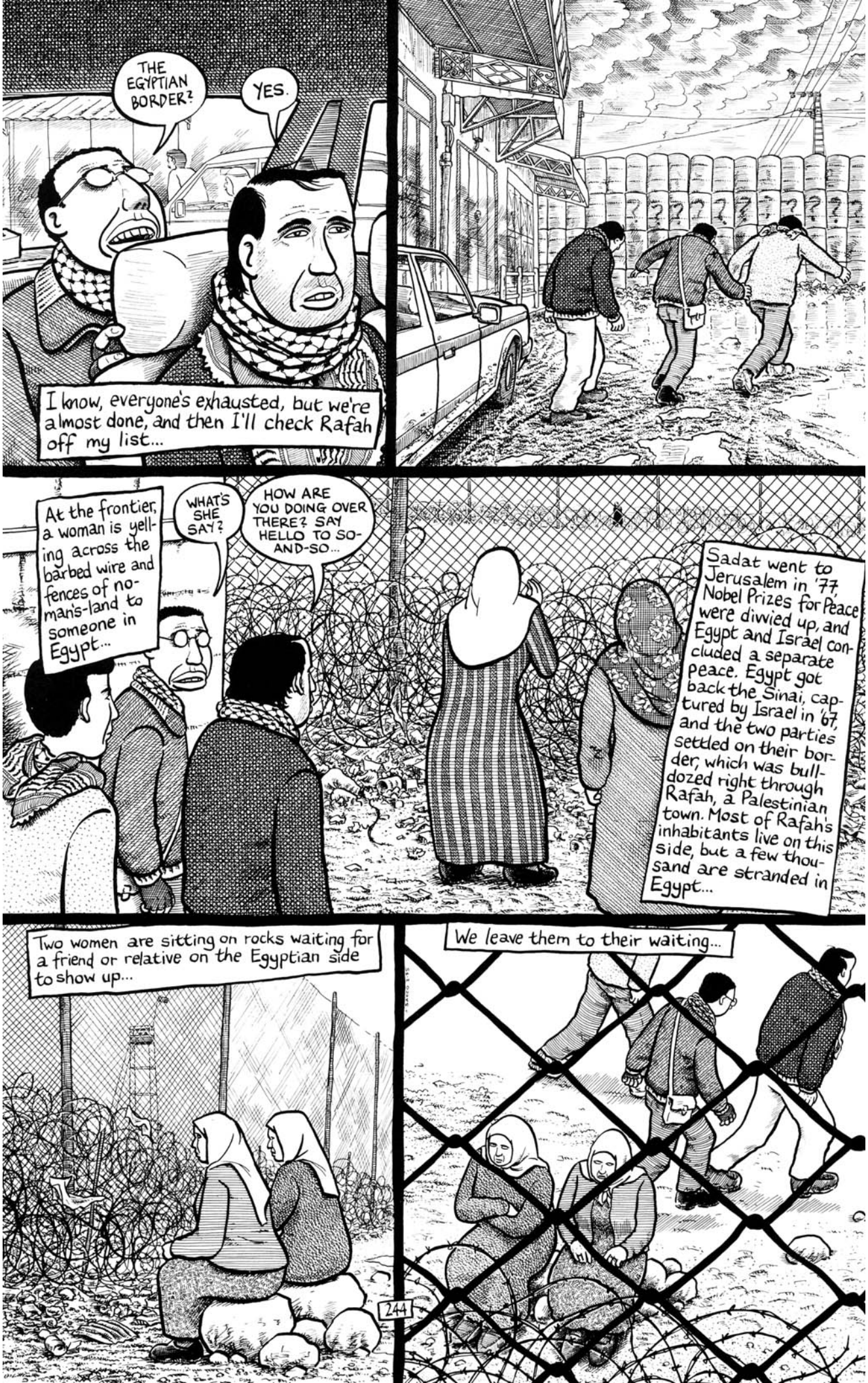
"We wanted to bury him next to his brother, but the soldiers refused... until we phoned a human rights organization in Jerusalem. They intervened on our behalf...



"The burial was like the one before. The soldiers didn't bring the body till 1 a.m. Only the family was allowed...
"They gave us five minutes to wash him. I forgot some of the material to cover his body. I went to get it, but the soldiers wouldn't let me...
"They laughed at me...
"At the wake... the soldiers attacked our home. They beat ladies. They injured my eldest son in the head. They wanted to take him...
"All the women came out of their homes to shout at the soldiers...
"They pushed us into a room and closed the door...
"But I broke a window and jumped out...
"They couldn't take my son because there were so many people, but they took his identity card...."
SEVEN MONTHS AFTER AHMED DIED, MY HUSBAND DIED...
HE HAD A HEART PROBLEM...
THEY DIDN'T GIVE HIM PERMISSION TO GO TO EGYPT TO BE TREATED UNTIL THE END...
HE DIED ON THE ROAD...

Okay, we're running late, we've been here an hour and a half, we're wiped out and I still want to check out the Egyptian border and interview a family whose home's been demolished before I get back to Gaza Town for a late cab to Jerusalem...
WILL YOU TELL HER THANK YOU FOR SHARING ALL THIS WITH ME. I KNOW IT MUST BE HARD TO TELL A STRANGER...
TELL HER WE'VE GOT TO GET GOING. TELL HER, YOU KNOW...
But she's not finished! Okay, we've had a thorough run-through ...we've shot her boys, we've chased their bodies from hospital to hospital, we've buried them in the middle of the night, their portraits have been staring down at us, and we've even fingered her son Ahmed's blood-stained school pack... Now what?
SHE ASKS, WHAT GOOD IS IT TO TALK TO YOU?
HUH?
SHE SAYS SHE'S BEEN INTERVIEWED BEFORE, EVEN ISRAELI T.V. INTERVIEWED HER. SHE'S USED TO IT.
SHE WANTS TO KNOW HOW TALKING TO YOU IS GOING TO HELP HER. WE DON'T WANT MONEY, SHE SAYS, WE WANT OUR LAND, OUR HUMANITY.
AREN'T WE PEOPLE, TOO?
WELL, OF COURSE... TELL HER I KNOW AMERICA'S POLICIES ARE UNJUST... TELL HER I HOPE MY WORK—
SHE SAYS SHE ALREADY KNOWS ABOUT AMERICA AND BRITAIN...
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF GERMANY? WHAT ABOUT ITALY AND JAPAN?

TELL HER MOST OF THE PEOPLE I KNOW IN GERMANY SUPPORT THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE. TELL HER—
SHE SAYS WITH WORDS ONLY.
SHE SAYS SO WHAT?
HOW ARE WORDS GOING TO CHANGE THINGS?
SHE SAYS SHE WANTS TO SEE ACTION.
WELL...
TELL HER I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO HER.
WHERE'S MY SHOES?
But now she's thanking me, offering tea again...
TELL HER THANKS BUT WE'VE GOT TO RUN.
Wait! Something else to show me! She calls for her eldest son...
See that? Where the soldiers beat him on the head? See that scar?
Scars? I've seen scars! And scabs! What's next? The Egyptian frontier? The family whose home's been demolished?
What time is it?

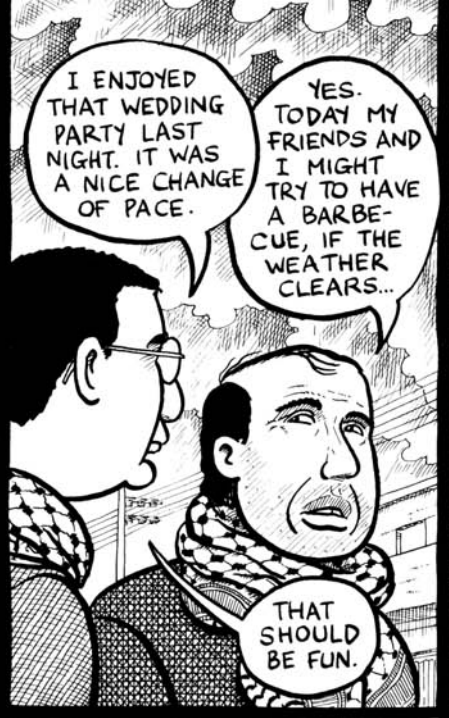

THE EGYPTIAN BORDER?
YES.
I know, everyone's exhausted, but we're almost done, and then I'll check Rafah off my list...
At the frontier, a woman is yelling across the barbed wire and fences of no-man's-land to someone in Egypt...
WHAT'S SHE SAY?
HOW ARE YOU DOING OVER THERE? SAY HELLO TO SO-AND-SO...
Sadat went to Jerusalem in '77, Nobel Prizes for Peace were dished up, and Egypt and Israel concluded a separate peace. Egypt got back the Sinai, captured by Israel in '67, and the two parties settled on their border, which was bulldozed right through Rafah, a Palestinian town. Most of Rafah's inhabitants live on this side, but a few thousand are stranded in Egypt...
Two women are sitting on rocks waiting for a friend or relative on the Egyptian side to show up...
We leave them to their waiting...

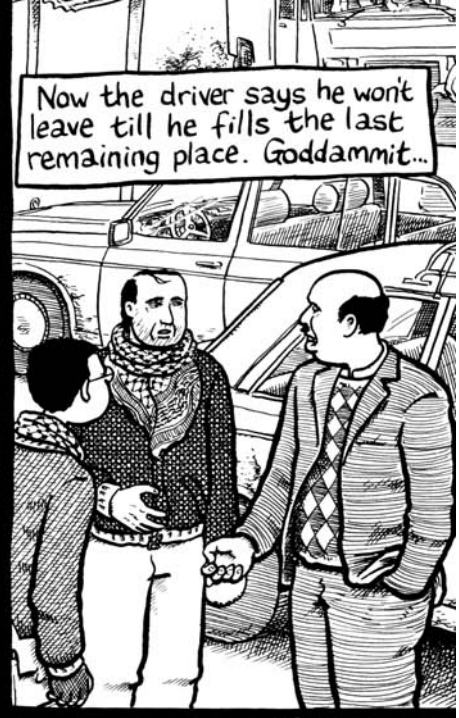
A few blocks later, we get word—masked men ahead!
We leave the car as part of a roadblock and go to see what's going on...
It's a couple of Fateh boys delivering messages from their leadership to the people of Rafah...
IT SAYS, "BLOCK THE ROAD THAT TAKES YOU TO THE SWAMP OF BETRAYAL AND TAKE THE ROAD OF THE GOOD PEOPLE."
Wise words indeed, but what time is it? I've got barely half an hour for the next appointment and then it'll have to be back to Gaza Town chop-chop for the last cab out...
245

Here we are. Introductions. These people were among those displaced when Egypt and Israel made peace and drew their border through Rafah...
As always, Sameh translates...
THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES ORDERED PALESTINIANS ON THEIR SIDE TO BE 40 METERS FROM THE BORDER...
OUR HOME WAS ONE METER FROM THE BORDER.
"They took us to see some land. They said we would be given the land and some money. But we refused...
"Some of the people who refused to leave, they took to prison... In the end... the military told us they would destroy our home with the people inside. They gave us 24 hours to leave...
"They gave us $3,000 and 200 square meters of land. But the house we left was 600 square meters. We lived in a tent for one year..."
AFTER ONE YEAR WE BUILT A ROOM, FOUR-BY-FOUR METERS. OUR FAMILY, SEVEN PEOPLE, LIVED IN THIS...
SIX MONTHS LATER WE FINISHED OUR HOUSE. IT COST NEARLY $20,000.
That's that! A speed interview! An entire tragedy in under 20 minutes...
246

Yousef drives us to the taxis. It's time to get back to Gaza Town...
HE SAYS IF YOU REALLY WANT TO SEE RAFAH, YOU NEED AT LEAST A WEEK.
YES. I'M SORRY I DON'T HAVE MORE TIME.
T. BACCO 3-95
Near Gaza Town, the roads are washed out. We have to approach from another direction...
WELCOME TO GAZA

WEL-COME TO HELL.
At the taxi stand on Omar el-Mukhtar St., there's still one taxi left for Jerusalem...
HE SAYS HE'LL LEAVE AS SOON AS HE HAS A COUPLE MORE PASSEN-GERS.
Two cars whiz by and screech into Al-Shifa hospital, right across the street...
PROBABLY THEY'RE BRING-ING IN SOME WOUNDED.
I buy Sameh a falafel...
I'M SORRY FOR ALL THE TROUBLE I SEEM TO HAVE CAUSED YOU AT WORK. I HOPE THINGS WILL BE OKAY.
WE'LL SEE.
I apologize some more and thank him for everything...
YOU WILL COME AGAIN IN TWO YEARS?
I'D LIKE TO. I'LL TRY. IT DEPENDS. I'D LIKE TO, THOUGH.
248


I ENJOYED THAT WEDDING PARTY LAST NIGHT. IT WAS A NICE CHANGE OF PACE.
YES. TODAY MY FRIENDS AND I MIGHT TRY TO HAVE A BARBE-CUE, IF THE WEATHER CLEARS...
THAT SHOULD BE FUN.


Now the driver says he won't leave till he fills the last remaining place. Goddammit...

LISTEN, SAMEH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT WITH ME...
YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS YOUR BAR-BECUE.

We say our goodbyes and now I'm waiting alone. This could go on forever...

Finally the taxi is full. We can leave for Jerusalem...

Jerusalem! A shower! A change of undies! That girl from France at the hostel! The Dutch girl!

But there's a kid sitting next to me who says he's done two years in Ansar III for throwing stones...

We've got one and a half hours till Jerusalem, and he wants to tell me all about it...

Chapter Nine

THROUGH OTHER EYES
First and foremost, I am a gentleman...
These young Tel Aviv ladies on their day trip require directions to the Old City, I'm happy to lead the way...
I know my Jerusalem!
Only thing is, we get up to the limestone walls and suddenly they're insistent on knowing the gate...
Which gate is this?
It's not Damascus Gate?
No no, Jaffa Gate!
They want to be sure of the gate...
IS IT A DANGEROUS GATE?
NO. WELL, I DON'T THINK SO.
PEOPLE ARE KNIFED BY THE ARABS, YOU KNOW. IT'S NOT JUST STORIES.
DON'T WORRY. THIS WILL TAKE US INTO THE ARMENIAN QUARTER.
253

Their names are Naomi and Paula...
THEY WILL KNOW WE ARE ISRAELIS...
LET'S NOT SPEAK HEBREW...
I lead them to the ramparts overlooking the Arab village of Silwan...
I've told you this story already, how Jewish settlers forcibly evicted Silwan families and took over their homes...
That happened eight weeks ago, shortly after I arrived, and nothing's changed...
there's still Israeli flags over Silwan...
I HAVE A BOYFRIEND WHOSE SISTER IS ONE OF THOSE OCCUPYING A HOUSE THERE. SHE HAS ALL THESE RELIGIOUS JUSTIFICATIONS, BUT IT'S WRONG.
I WOULD NEVER CROSS THE GREEN LINE INTO ARAB LAND. IT'S NOT MY COUNTRY OVER THERE.
MAYBE. IF I WERE A PALESTINIAN, I'D BE A TERRORIST, TOO, TO GET BACK MY LAND...
254

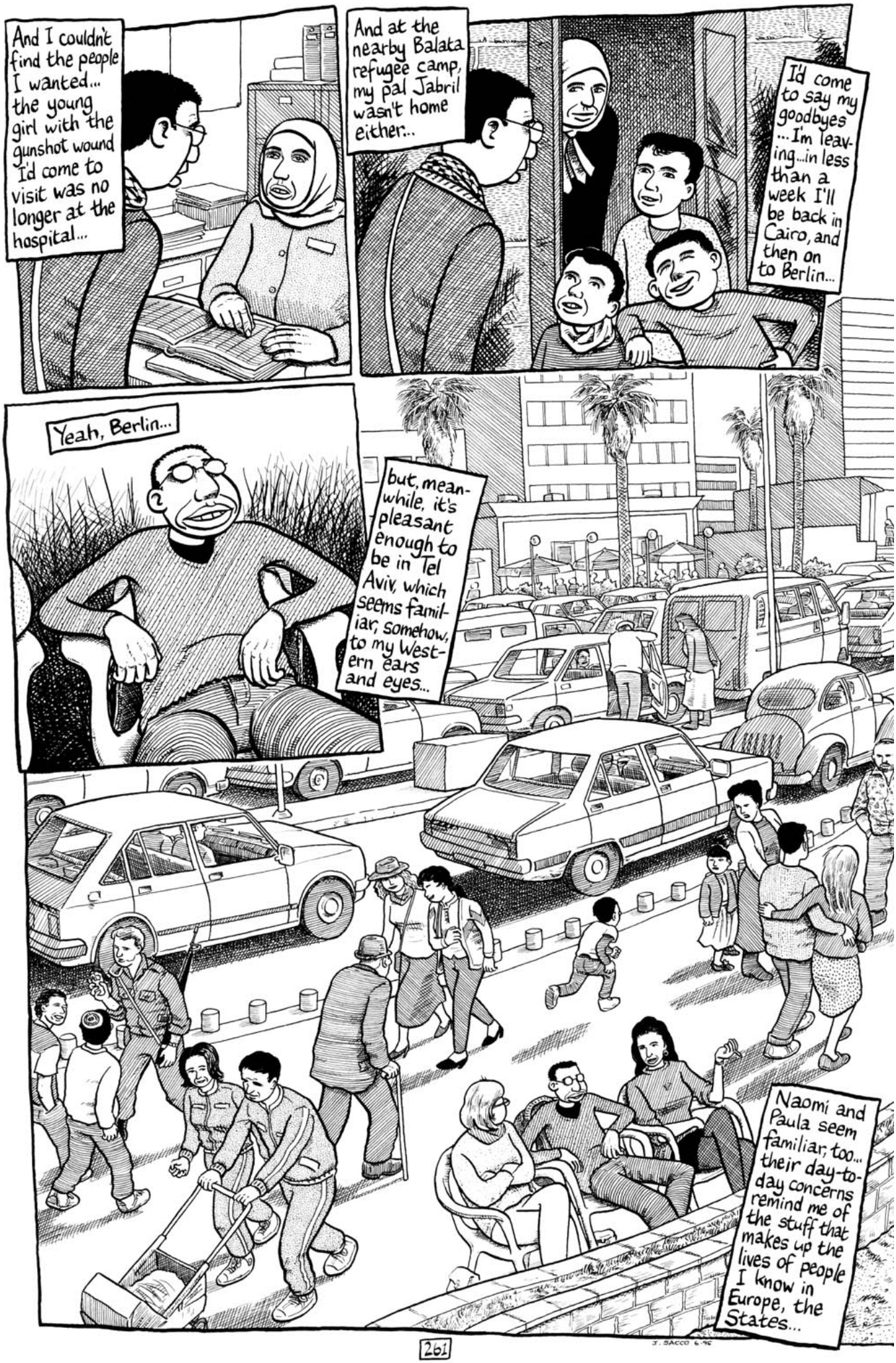
It turns out my companions are architects...
LOOK AT SILWAN. LOOK HOW IT FITS INTO THE COUNTRY-SIDE...
AND THEN YOU SEE THE JEWISH SETTLEMENTS, AND THEY LOOK OUT OF PLACE...
I WOULD NEVER WORK ON BUILDINGS FOR SETTLERS ON THE WEST BANK...
I KNOW ONE ARCHITECT WHO TURNED DOWN A BIG JOB DESIGN-ING HOUSES FOR A SETTLE-MENT...
PEOPLE TOLD HIM HE SHOULD DO IT, THAT HE SHOULD THINK OF HIS CHILDREN...
And what about Paula? Would she work for a settlement?
I DON'T KNOW. I'M NOT SURE.
It turns out Paula spent some time on the West Bank during her army service... She was a map maker for an IDF artillery unit near Jericho...
YES, I LIKED MY TIME IN THE ARMY. IT WAS AN INTERESTING TWO YEARS. I WAS MEETING PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER ISRAEL...
ES-PECIALLY BOYS.
ES-PECIALLY BOYS.
BUT, REALLY, WHEN I WAS THERE, I UNDERSTOOD THE DANGER OF GIVING THE LAND BACK TO THE ARABS...

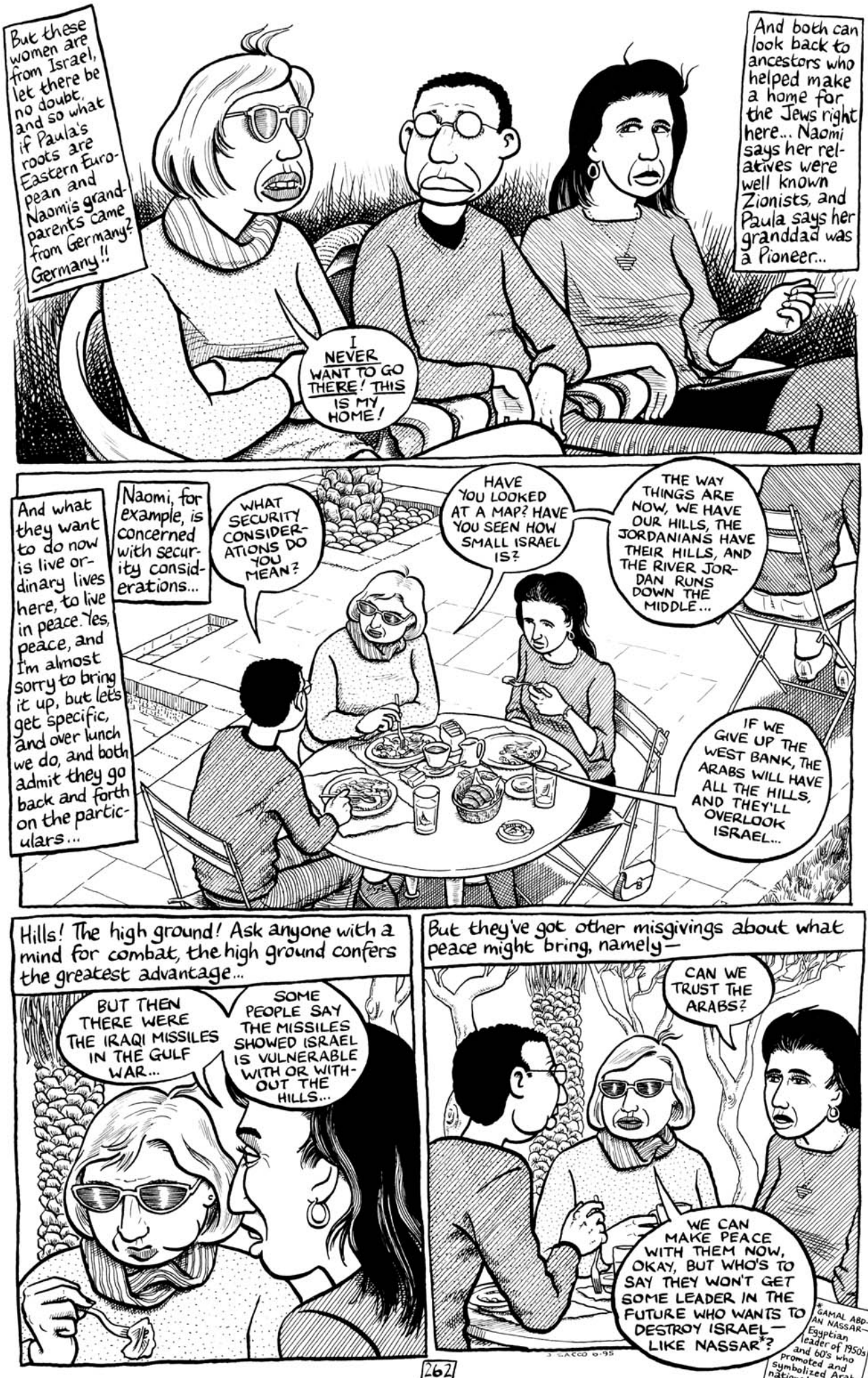
I guide them through the Jewish Quarter to the Western Wall...
We talk some more and I drop my guard, I tell them about my project, that I've come to meet Palestinians...
YOU'VE BEEN HERE TWO MONTHS AND YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO TEL AVIV?
TO HAIFA?
SHOULDN'T YOU BE SEEING OUR SIDE OF THE STORY, TOO?
And what can I say? I say I've heard nothing but the Israeli side most all my life, that it'd take a whole other trip to see Israel, that I'd like to meet Israelis, but that wasn't why I was here...
And standing there with two girls from Tel Aviv, it occurs to me that I have seen the Israelis, but through Palestinian eyes—that Israelis were mainly soldiers and settlers to me now, too...
DO YOU WANT TO WALK THROUGH THE ARAB MARKET?
NO NO! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!
NOTHING WILL HAPPEN. IT'S REALLY COLORFUL. THERE'S ALL THESE STALLS AND SHOPS. NOTHING'S EVER HAPPENED TO ME.
JEWS GET STABBED IN THERE.
I SEE ORTHODOX JEWS WALKING THROUGH THERE... AND THERE'S ALWAYS TOURISTS.
I'LL GO.
WELL, I'M NOT GOING.
256

Is she acting nervous?
hope no one says anything
we walking too fast?
he looking at us?
are they?
very colorful...
why is she looking at her feet?
she's acting nervous
couple more corners
258

Just through here...
this last turn...
Thank you, Jesus!
SEE!
WE MADE IT!
THAT WASN'T THAT BAD, WAS IT?

It's a warm day, it's sunny, and the Mediterranean is blue and lapping at the shore...
I've taken off my jacket, that's the sort of day it is, and if I were to stretch out on the sand or a bench, probably I'd fall asleep...
SHERATON
TEL AVIV
And I'm glad to be in Tel Aviv with Naomi and Paula, who wouldn't let me off the hook and insisted I visit and experience something of Israel...
And we're chatting happily about this and that... about jobs, Jewish families, the latest Woody Allen... about relationships and boyfriends...
And probably one or both of them have got the hots for me, and on a day like today, who can blame them?
Yesterday I was wound up so tight... I was in Nablus, a town strung out on the occupation, and yesterday...
Well, yesterday in Nablus was nothing unusual ... patrols ... a stone or two flying, school kids bolting in the other direction... but tension is cumulative... and now, just the sight of patrols, just the sight—
260

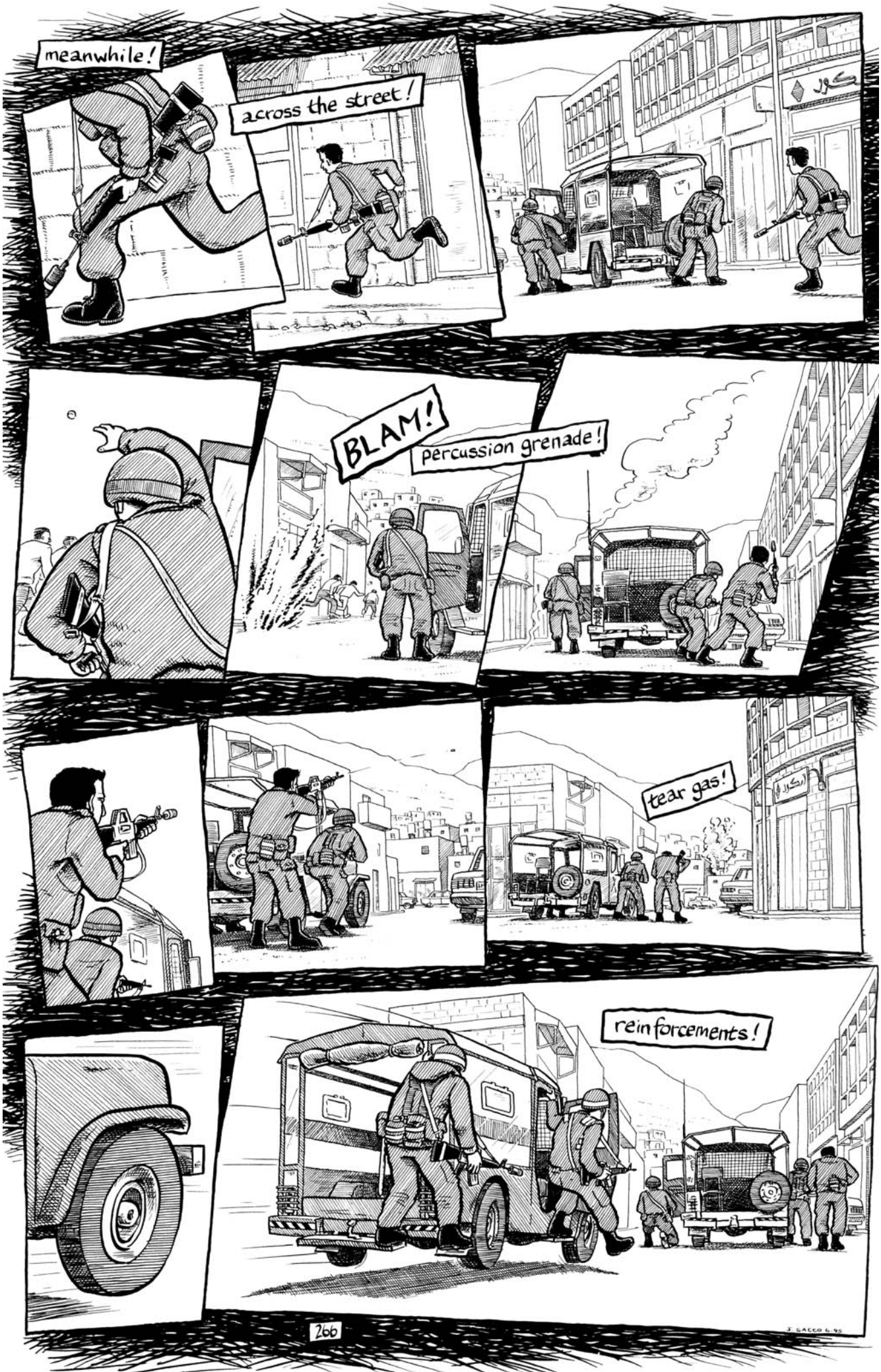

And I couldn't find the people I wanted... the young girl with the gunshot wound I'd come to visit was no longer at the hospital...
And at the nearby Balata refugee camp, my pal Jabril wasn't home either...
I'd come to say my goodbyes ...I'm leaving...in less than a week I'll be back in Cairo, and then on to Berlin...
Yeah, Berlin...
but, meanwhile, it's pleasant enough to be in Tel Aviv, which seems familiar; somehow, to my Western ears and eyes...
Naomi and Paula seem familiar, too... their day-to-day concerns remind me of the stuff that makes up the lives of people I know in Europe, the States...
J. SACCO 6-96


But these women are from Israel, let there be no doubt, and so what if Paula's roots are Eastern European and Naomi's grandparents came from Germany? Germany!!
I NEVER WANT TO GO THERE! THIS IS MY HOME!
And both can look back to ancestors who helped make a home for the Jews right here... Naomi says her relatives were well known Zionists, and Paula says her granddad was a Pioneer...
And what they want to do now is live ordinary lives here, to live in peace. Yes, peace, and I'm almost sorry to bring it up, but let's get specific, and over lunch we do, and both admit they go back and forth on the particulars...
Naomi, for example, is concerned with security considerations...
WHAT SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS DO YOU MEAN?
HAVE YOU LOOKED AT A MAP? HAVE YOU SEEN HOW SMALL ISRAEL IS?
THE WAY THINGS ARE NOW, WE HAVE OUR HILLS, THE JORDANIANS HAVE THEIR HILLS, AND THE RIVER JORDAN RUNS DOWN THE MIDDLE...
IF WE GIVE UP THE WEST BANK, THE ARABS WILL HAVE ALL THE HILLS, AND THEY'LL OVERLOOK ISRAEL...
Hills! The high ground! Ask anyone with a mind for combat, the high ground confers the greatest advantage...
BUT THEN THERE WERE THE IRAQI MISSILES IN THE GULF WAR...
SOME PEOPLE SAY THE MISSILES SHOWED ISRAEL IS VULNERABLE WITH OR WITHOUT THE HILLS...
But they've got other misgivings about what peace might bring, namely—
CAN WE TRUST THE ARABS?
WE CAN MAKE PEACE WITH THEM NOW, OKAY, BUT WHO'S TO SAY THEY WON'T GET SOME LEADER IN THE FUTURE WHO WANTS TO DESTROY ISRAEL— LIKE NASSAR*?
J. SACCO 6-95
*GAMAL ABDAN NASSAR— Egyptian leader of 1950's and 60's who promoted and symbolized Arab nationalism and unity.

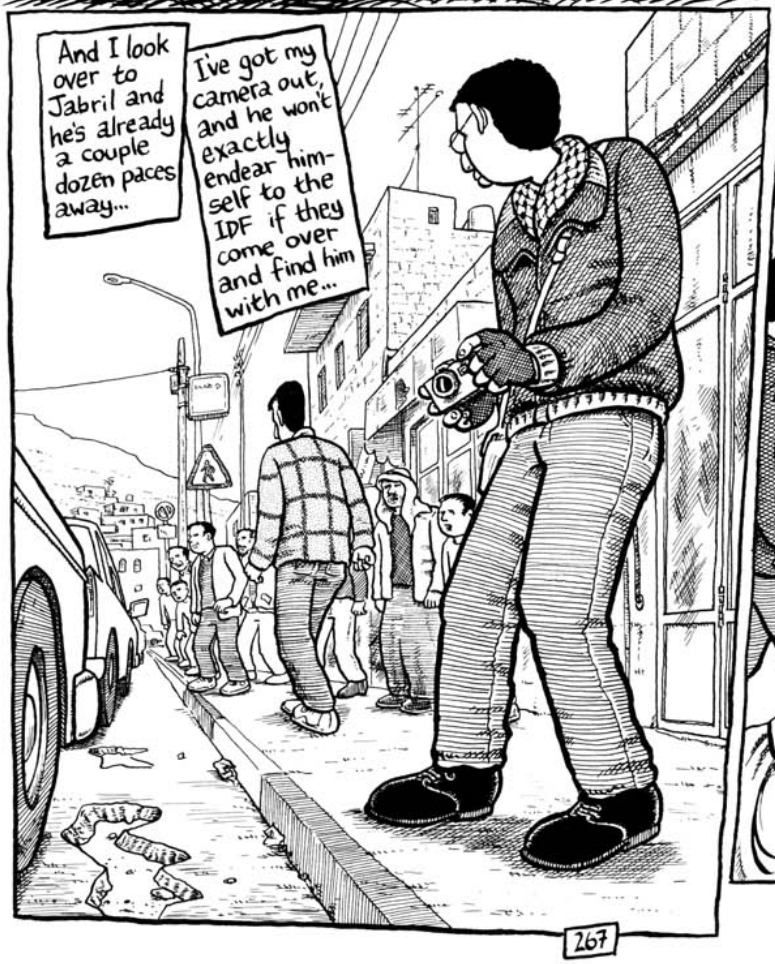
THE ARABS GO CRAZY. THEY'VE STARTED OTHER WARS.
LOOK AT SADAT. HE CAME TO JERUSALEM, HE WANTED PEACE, LOOK WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.
I UNDERSTAND, BUT YOU HAVE EXTREMISTS IN ISRAEL, TOO.
SURE WE HAVE EXTREMISTS, BUT YOU DIDN'T SEE ANYONE HERE SHOOTING MENACHEM BEGIN FOR SIGNING A PEACE TREATY WITH EGYPT...
OKAY, BUT FROM A PALESTINIAN PERSPECTIVE, ISRAEL'S EXPANSION OF THE SETTLEMENTS DOESN'T EXACTLY BUILD TRUST EITHER.
I'M AGAINST THE SETTLEMENTS!
AND WHAT ABOUT JERUSALEM? THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT REFUSES TO EVEN CONSIDER GIVING THE OCCUPIED PART UP...
NO, WE CAN NEVER GIVE UP JERUSALEM. THE CITY CANNOT BE DIVIDED AGAIN.
IT'S THE SYMBOL OF ISRAEL.
JERUSALEM REPRESENTS WHAT'S OLD AND WHAT'S NEW ABOUT JEWISH HERITAGE. THE TEMPLE WAS THERE.
ARE YOU RELIGIOUS?
NO, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT JERUSALEM, I'M NOT SURE WHAT. WE HAVE SO MUCH HISTORY THERE. JERUSALEM IS WHY JEWS RETURNED TO THIS PART OF THE WORLD...
I MEAN, COULD YOU IMAGINE A JEWISH HOMELAND IN UGANDA?
WELL, WHAT ABOUT A PALESTINIAN STATE? CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT?
I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE. BUT COULD IT BE ECONOMICALLY VIABLE? I KNOW THINGS IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS ARE BAD, BUT IN GENERAL CONDITIONS ARE BETTER FOR THE ARABS UNDER OCCUPATION THAN THEY WERE BEFORE.
I THINK THAT'S SORT OF A MYTH. THE TERRITORIES ARE ECONOMICALLY SUPPRESSED. THEY'RE A CAPTIVE MARKET AND A SOURCE OF CHEAP LABOR FOR ISRAEL...
AND AS FAR AS ECONOMIC VIABILITY IS CONCERNED, SHOULD THAT BE A CONDITION FOR STATEHOOD? WHERE WOULD ISRAEL BE WITHOUT THE MONEY IT GETS FROM THE STATES?
I DON'T LIKE OUR DEPENDENCE ON THE U.S. FOR MONEY.
J.SACCO © 95

BUT ASIDE FROM ALL THAT, THE PALESTINIANS WANT TO RULE THEMSELVES. THE OCCUPATION IS HARSH. DO YOU REALLY KNOW WHAT GOES ON OVER THERE?
ISRAELIS ARE TIRED OF APOLOGIZING FOR THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES! THERE WAS A WAR! WE WON THE LAND IN THE WAR! IT'S OUR LAND NOW!
Yikes! But when we met in Jerusalem, she said—
I'M NOT TRYING TO PROVOKE YOU, I'M—
PERHAPS I DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON, BUT MY BROTHER SERVED THERE, AND AFTERWARDS HE HAD TO SEE A PSYCHOLOGIST.
I KNOW A GUY WHO SERVED IN GAZA AND HIS NOSE WAS CRUSHED BY A STONE.
I'M SORRY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO PALESTINIANS, BUT THE SOLDIERS DON'T SHOOT ANYONE WITHOUT A WARNING...
FIRST THEY FIRE INTO THE AIR AND THEN AT THE LEGS, AND ANYONE WHO KILLS SOMEONE WITHOUT FOLLOWING REGULATIONS GOES ON TRIAL AND GETS SENT TO PRISON. I KNOW OF A CASE RIGHT NOW.
WELL, FROM TALKING TO PALESTINIANS WHO'VE BEEN SHOT, IT SOUNDS A LOT LESS DISCRIMINATING THAN THAT.
I'M NOT SAYING THERE'S NOT A MORAL PROBLEM WITH THE OCCUPATION...
BUT WHAT ABOUT PALESTINIANS WHO KILL PALESTINIANS THEY ACCUSE OF COLLABORATING WITH ISRAEL?
WHAT ABOUT PALESTINIAN TERRORISM?
WHAT ABOUT BURNING ISRAELI CHILDREN TO DEATH IN A CAR IN GAZA?
WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO DEFEND THAT...
BUT IS IT ALL TERRORISM TO YOU? WHAT ABOUT WHEN PALESTINIANS TAKE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE OCCUPATION FORCES?
DO THEY HAVE THAT RIGHT AT ALL?
WE JUST WANT TO LIVE OUR LIVES, OKAY? WE HAVE OUR LIVES! WE HAVE JOBS AND FAMILIES AND WE GO OUT AND LIVE JUST LIKE YOU DO... WE DON'T THINK ABOUT THIS STUFF ALL THE TIME, AND WE GET A BIT TIRED OF HEARING ABOUT IT!
IT'S NOT THAT WE'RE TIRED...
BUT WHEN YOU HEAR IT OVER AND OVER, YOU GET...
TIRED...
J. SACCO 695

LUCKY REUNION
I'm tired, too. I'm outta juice, man, counting days...
but the next morning I'm back in Nablus. I'm on my way north, my final excursion...
and here's a happy moment...
In a town as big as this, I've bumped into Jabril, my friend from Balata refugee camp...
I CAME BY TWO DAYS AGO TO SAY GOOD-BYE, BUT YOU WEREN'T HOME. I DIDN'T THINK I'D SEE YOU AGAIN.
WE ARE VERY LUCKY.
THIS SHOWS ME AGAIN, GOD IS GREAT!
We chat happily... a few minutes... three... four... we're chatting—
BAM BAM BAM
who's shooting?
at whom?
Stones!
bouncing on the road!
at what?
A SETTLER BUS.
huh? where?
J. SACCO 6.99
265


meanwhile!
across the street!
BLAM!
percussion grenade!
tear gas!
reinforcements!
J. SACCO 6.95

more tear gas!
the tear gas goes up...
and comes down on the roofs of the old city...
let's hope not through someone's kitchen window...


And I look over to Jabril and he's already a couple dozen paces away...
I've got my camera out, and he won't exactly endear himself to the IDF if they come over and find him with me...

After the commotion, our lucky reunion doesn't seem as sweet. We leave each other a few minutes later...
J. SACCO 6-95

I spend the night in a village in the north...
I've made the acquaintance of a Palestinian nurse who's from up there...
We're relaxing, not talking about Palestine or the occupation...
tonight the talk is of love...
She's telling me about her two years in Australia, her sweetheart there...
She has a photo album, she points him out...
She says she could never marry him, that it'd be socially unacceptable here...
religious differences, cultural differences...
I try to convince her otherwise... you know, "we can work it out, we can work it out..."♫
No no, she insists... her romance was always doomed...
SUGAR
Her mother, meantime, is experimenting on me with new variations on the concept of tea...
With each glass she increases the proportion of sugar... I'm trying to be polite, but my throat is searing...
And she keeps piling it in! The sugar can't possibly dissolve!
Finally, I have to protest: "May I have more tea in my sugar?" And my friend restrains her mother's hand...
In the morning, the radio informs us that three Israeli soldiers were hacked to death last night just over the green line from Jenin...
I'm supposed to meet someone in Jenin at 11... but the radio report isn't clear... has the army closed Jenin? Can I get into Jenin? Will I be able to get out?
J SACCO 7/96
268

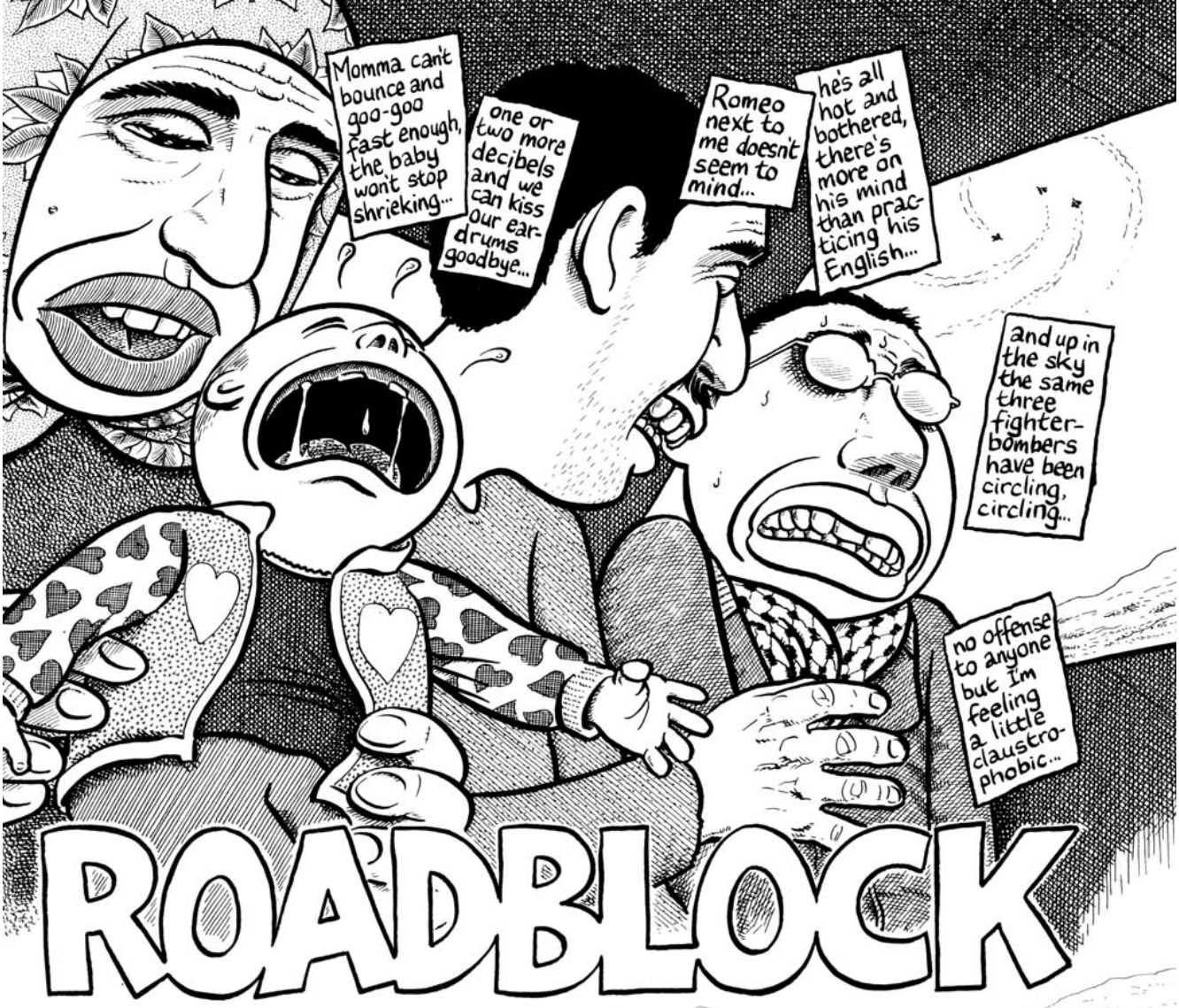
NABLUS

Nablus, back in Nablus...
and here the taxi drivers tell me, as far as they know, it's possible to get to Jenin and back...
I have an hour or so to kill...
Things are busy in Nablus...
The morn-ing's shop-ping is in full swing...
A couple of vendors call me over, pour me coffee...
The guy selling orange juice salutes me playfully as I walk by...
J. SACCO 6/95

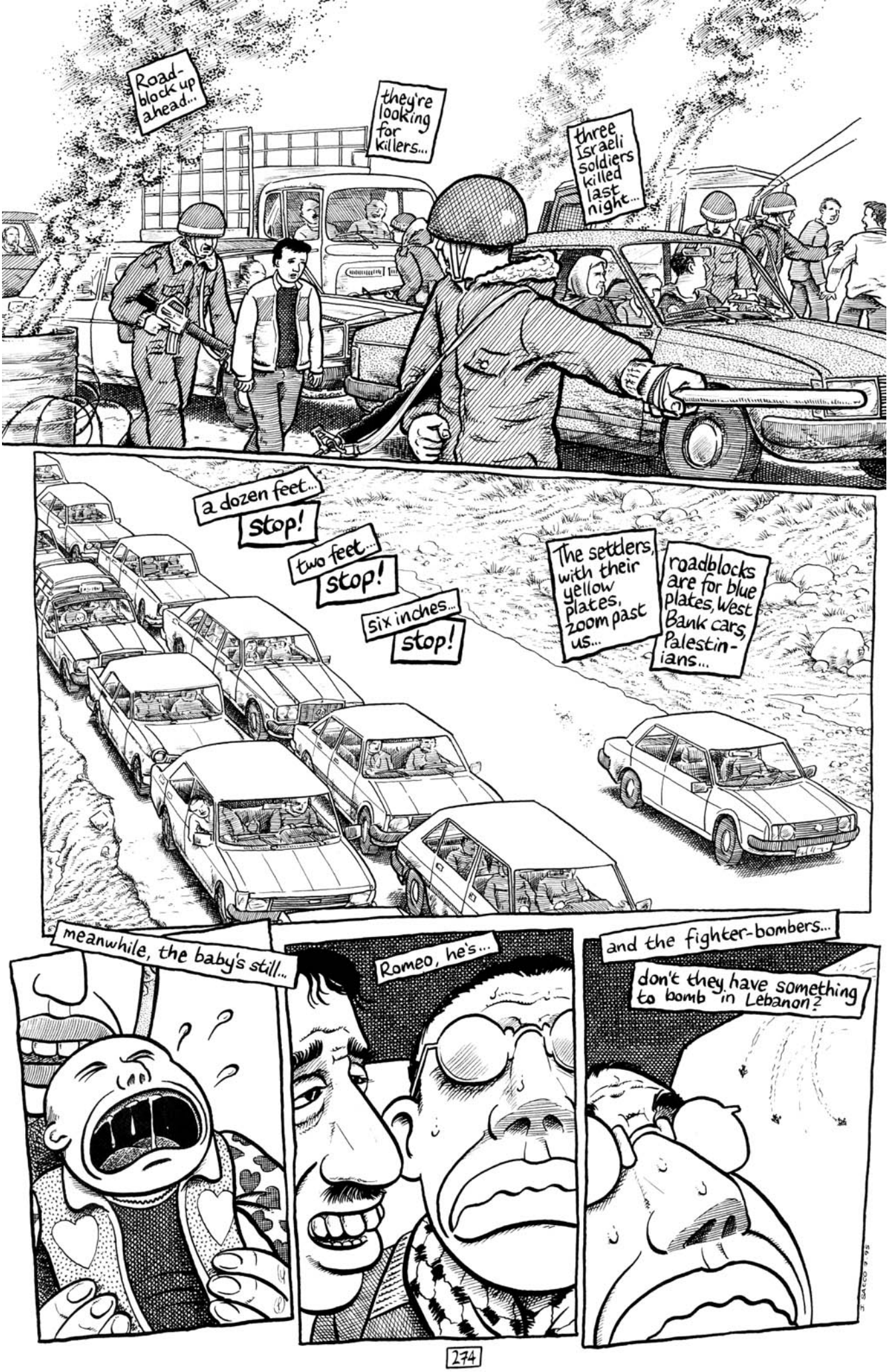
And then the soldiers show up...
hoo boy!
they've got this look!
last night someone snuck into a tent—
a massacre!
three of their own!
they pounce!
a vendor!
they're screaming!
pointing!
checking!
bananas, huh?
one false move and—
J. SACCO
Now what?
the soldiers
running
the orange juice guy
up against th
wall
slap
slap
slap
more?
more?
you want more?
270

but they're running again
across the street
back
across it again
who's next?
Some townspeople
frozen in place
waiting
watching
others
going about their business
like nothing's happening
meanwhile, the ballots are in!
the soldiers' decision is final!
and the loser is—
the guy selling cassettes!
they've got him surrounded!
they surround him with shouting!
they've got him by the scruff
they're hauling him up stairs
into a bank
and you can bet they ain't discussing high interest savings in there...
while one of them stands guard...
271

The soldiers run from the bank...
more threats!
shouting!
their spree continues down the street...
There's more soldiers on the scene now, three-man patrols, but these guys seem nervous, their knees wobbly, three of their own butchered last night...
That's it! I'm blowing this scene...
I'm on my way to Jenin...
but I oughta look where I'm going...
oops!
Pardon me!
JENIN?
JENIN.
69-27-865
272


Momma can't bounce and goo-goo fast enough, the baby won't stop shrieking...
one or two more decibels and we can kiss our eardrums goodbye...
Romeo next to me doesn't seem to mind...
he's all hot and bothered, there's more on his mind than practicing his English...
and up in the sky the same three fighter-bombers have been circling, circling...
no offense to anyone but I'm feeling a little claustrophobic...
ROADBLOCK

a dozen feet... stop!
ten feet... stop!
four feet... stop!
an hour...
an hour and a quarter...
well, forget about making my appointment in Jenin...
273


Road-block up ahead...
they're looking for killers...
three Israeli soldiers killed last night...
a dozen feet... stop!
two feet... stop!
six inches... stop!
The settlers, with their yellow plates, zoom past us...
roadblocks are for blue plates, West Bank cars, Palestinians...
meanwhile, the baby's still...
Romeo, he's...
and the fighter-bombers...
don't they have something to bomb in Lebanon?
J SACCO © '05

Gotta chill, I've had good luck in roadblocks, the soldiers have never singled me out... never asked me to hand over my bag ...never looked through my notes, my journals... I've got names, addresses in there... someone could get in trouble... you hear stories...
"don't have a cow, man"
but they don't stop us...
they barely give us the once-over...
I'm the king of all fucking roadblocks!
TAXI
J. SACCO '93
275

JENIN

All right, I got here late, I've missed my appointment, so I wander aimlessly until I come across an older man, an ex-school teacher... he sits under the gaze of Israeli soldiers in their rooftop positions and gets to speculating about the future of Palestine and the Palestinians...

'TO BE OR NOT TO BE... THAT IS THE QUESTION.'

'HAMLET'

YES. SHAKESPEARE. VERY GOOD PLAYS. 'JULIUS CAESAR'! AND SHAW!

WHAT ABOUT ARAB WRITERS?

ALL FOOLS.

ANY GOOD ARAB LEADERS?

NO.

NOT NASSAR?

NO NO.

NO ONE?

SALADIN*!

*SALADIN - 12th century Arab sultan who fought the crusades.

WE DON'T HAVE LEADERS. THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS ARE LIKE THE TAIL OF A SNAKE, AND THE HEAD OF THE SNAKE IS BRITAIN OR AMERICA. BUT THE WORST HAS BEEN BRITAIN.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE ISRAELIS WILL REACT, WILL THEY GET HARDER BECAUSE THREE OF THEIR SOLDIERS WERE KILLED?

HARDER SOFTER, SOFTER HARDER, IT DOESN'T MATTER... IT WILL GO ON FOREVER AND FOREVER.

WHAT ABOUT THE PEACE PROCESS?

IT WAS DEAD BEFORE IT WAS BORN. PEACE PROCESS, BEAST PROCESS.

J. SACCO 95

HERE IS MY FRIEND.
SALAAM ALEEKUM.
ALEEKUM ES-SALAAM.
OUR LEADERS? YES, I LIKE OUR LEADERS. THEY ARE GOOD — THE ONES IN PALESTINE, THE ONES OUTSIDE.
THIS MAN, THE ISRAELIS DESTROYED HIS HOUSE.
YES. THEY BLEW IT UP.
HIS SON THREW A MOLOTOV. HIS SENTENCE IS 11 YEARS.
HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVED IN YOUR HOUSE?
NINE.
NINE PLUS NINE PLUS NINE PLUS NINE...
FOR-EVER!
DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE PEACE?
I DON'T THINK IT WILL COME FROM THIS PEACE PROCESS.
WE ARABS, WE ARE ONE RELIGION, ONE HISTORY...
ONE DAY THERE WILL COME NEW LEADERS TO JORDAN, TO SYRIA, TO LEBANON... AND THEN—
WE MUST HAVE OUR FREEDOM!
AND WE WILL TAKE IT!
YOU WILL SEE! YOU WILL SEE!
YOU DON'T AGREE WITH YOUR FRIEND?
NO, HE BELIEVES WE WILL GET HELP FROM OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS.
DO YOU KNOW THAT THE ISRAELIS, THEY ARE NOT THE JEWS? THE SOLDIERS ARE NOT THE JEWS. YOU KNOW WHO IS THE JEW? MUBAREK! BECAUSE HE BETRAYS HIS PEOPLE AND HE DOES IT ALL FOR THE MONEY OF THE AMERICANS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ISRAELI LEADERS? SHAMIR?
A GOOD MAN! HE WORKS FOR HIS PEOPLE!
AND THERE WILL NEVER BE PEACE!
NEVER!
J. SACCO 89

YOU DON'T THINK THE ISRAELIS WILL LEAVE?
THEY WILL NEVER LEAVE. THEY WILL ONLY FLEE.
YOU SEE THEM UP THERE, ON THE ROOFS, LOOKING? THEY MUST PAY ATTENTION...
ONCE THEY SLEEP WE WILL...
KKKKIK
CAN JEWS LIVE TOGETHER WITH PALESTINIANS IN SEPARATE STATES?
NEVER! THEY WANT THIS LAND, WE WANT THIS LAND. EVEN IF THEY GO BEHIND THE GREEN LINE, WHAT IF I OWN A CAVE BY HAIFA? THAT IS STILL MY CAVE!
SALAAM ALEEKUM.
ALEEKUM ES-SALAAM.
THIS MAN, HE HAD LAND AND A HOUSE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GREEN LINE, THEY TOOK IT FROM HIM... THE ISRAELIS HAVE HIS OLIVE TREES NOW. ASK HIM IF HE WILL EVER GIVE UP THIS LAND...
WHAT'S HE SAYING?
HE SAYS IF THEY GAVE HIM ALL THE LAND BETWEEN HERE AND PAKISTAN, HE WOULDN'T GIVE UP A ROCK OF THE LAND THEY TOOK FROM HIM.
HAHAHA HAHAHAHA
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS PEACE PROCESS IS? IT IS OUR PALESTINIAN LEADERS SIGNING PAPERS TO MAKE WHAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE DONE LEGAL... BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER. LET THEM MAKE IT LEGAL...
IT DOESN'T CHANGE A THING!
J. SACCO 895

A BOY IN THE RAIN
I met an Irishman in Jerusalem, he was an Oxford student with plans for going into the Anglican priesthood, but his interests ranged over the entire Judeo-Christian spectrum... he was a connoisseur ...in fact, a real religions nut...
he did the Stations of the Cross with the Franciscans...
...joined the Armenian Orthodox for evening vespers...
...and you better believe he was rubbing his hands in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre...
Fridays, with a tefillin shelrosh strapped to his head, he was down at the Western Wall, lying outright about having a Jewish mother in order to get invited to Shabbat supper by the Hasidim...
Me, I didn't go for that jazz, I'd come to the same place but with a different theme—you know, the Palestinian question...
The Irishman, who could toss wonders with assorted olives and a few greens, was at the hostel for weeks, and we began sharing meals and our respective days' adventures...
he beamed about kissing the ring of the visiting Archbishop of Canterbury...
I held forth on Ramallah and its percussion grenades...
I suppose both our dreams were coming true...
J SACCO 8'92

The one time our agendas intersected was in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, Christmas Eve...
He was there, of course, for Midnight Mass. Even I, a Catholic long lapsed, put in a genuflection at the Church of St. Catherine...
But it got old quick, with all the pilgrims pushing and shoving in dozens of languages, and, besides, a pillar blocked my view...
I left my Irish buddy, his eyes shut tight in concentration on the Latin, in search of my own particular brand of fodder among the on-edge Israeli soldiers and their security checks...
And I didn't need to look far — the mass was being shown (for those who hadn't elbowed their way into the church) on a big screen set up in Manger Square on the side of Israeli police headquarters...
I dare say both the Irishman and I left Bethlehem that night thoroughly satisfied — he with another religious spectacle under his belt, I with one more of the occupation's mean ironies to gloat over...
but that's the thing about coming to the Holy Land or Palestine or Israel or whatever you want to call it... no one who knows what he's come here looking for leaves without having found it...
J. SACCO 8-95

And a few weeks later, on the bus, out, bound for Cairo, I met a lady who had found what she'd come for, too...
She was Jewish, from New York, the large part of her family had been liquidated in the Holocaust, she'd been taken out of Germany in the nick of time... And she'd just spent three weeks of her vacation doing volunteer work for the Israeli army... She'd come to see the beautiful, vibrant, besieged Israel, and she wasn't leaving disappointed either...
ISRAEL IS WONDERFUL...
THE ISRAELIS ARE WONDERFUL...
IT'S SAD THOUGH, IT'S SAD, TO SEE THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE HAVING TO CARRY GUNS BECAUSE THERE'S ALWAYS A THREAT...
AND AFTER ALL THEIR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN THROUGH...
WELL, THERE'S ANOTHER SIDE TO THE STORY OF ISRAEL. THE PALESTINIANS—
ALL I'M SAYING IS I WANT PEACE.
Yes yes, we all want peace, whatever that is, but peace can mean different things, too, and isn't described identically by all who wish to imagine it...
One of my first days in Jerusalem, I found myself sitting in the back room of an Arab jewelry shop with a Palestinian, an Israeli, and two Americans who did press work for a non-governmental organization. We were analyzing the current peace process, envisioning, as one does, what, if anything, might work...
SOMETIMES I THINK ONE PLURALISTIC STATE OF ARABS AND JEWS WOULD MAKE THE MOST SENSE — IN THE LONG TERM, ANYWAY.
I THINK THE MOST PREVALENT IDEA IS THAT A TWO-STATE SOLUTION IS THE ONE WITH THE BEST CHANCE OF ACCEPTANCE AND SUCCESS.
J. SACCO 8.95

The Israeli listened to our little debate for awhile, then said—
ULTIMATELY, I DON'T THINK PEACE IS ABOUT WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE ONE STATE OR TWO. OF COURSE THAT ISSUE IS IMPORTANT, BUT WHAT IS THE POINT OF TWO RACIST STATES OR ONE RACIST STATE... OR ONE RACIST STATE DOMINATING ANOTHER? THE POINT IS WHETHER THE TWO PEOPLES CAN LIVE SIDE BY SIDE AS EQUALS.
and I remember another time in Jerusalem, a month later...
a group of Israeli soldiers stopped a Palestinian youth of 12 or 13...
The soldiers took cover under an awning and they made the boy remove his keffiyeh and pointed to where he should stand—in the rain...
Perhaps for the boy it was one of dozens of humiliations, bad enough in his personal scheme of things, but no worse than others he'd experienced... I don't know...
and I'd come for the occupation and I found what I'd come to find, and here it was again, and something else, too...
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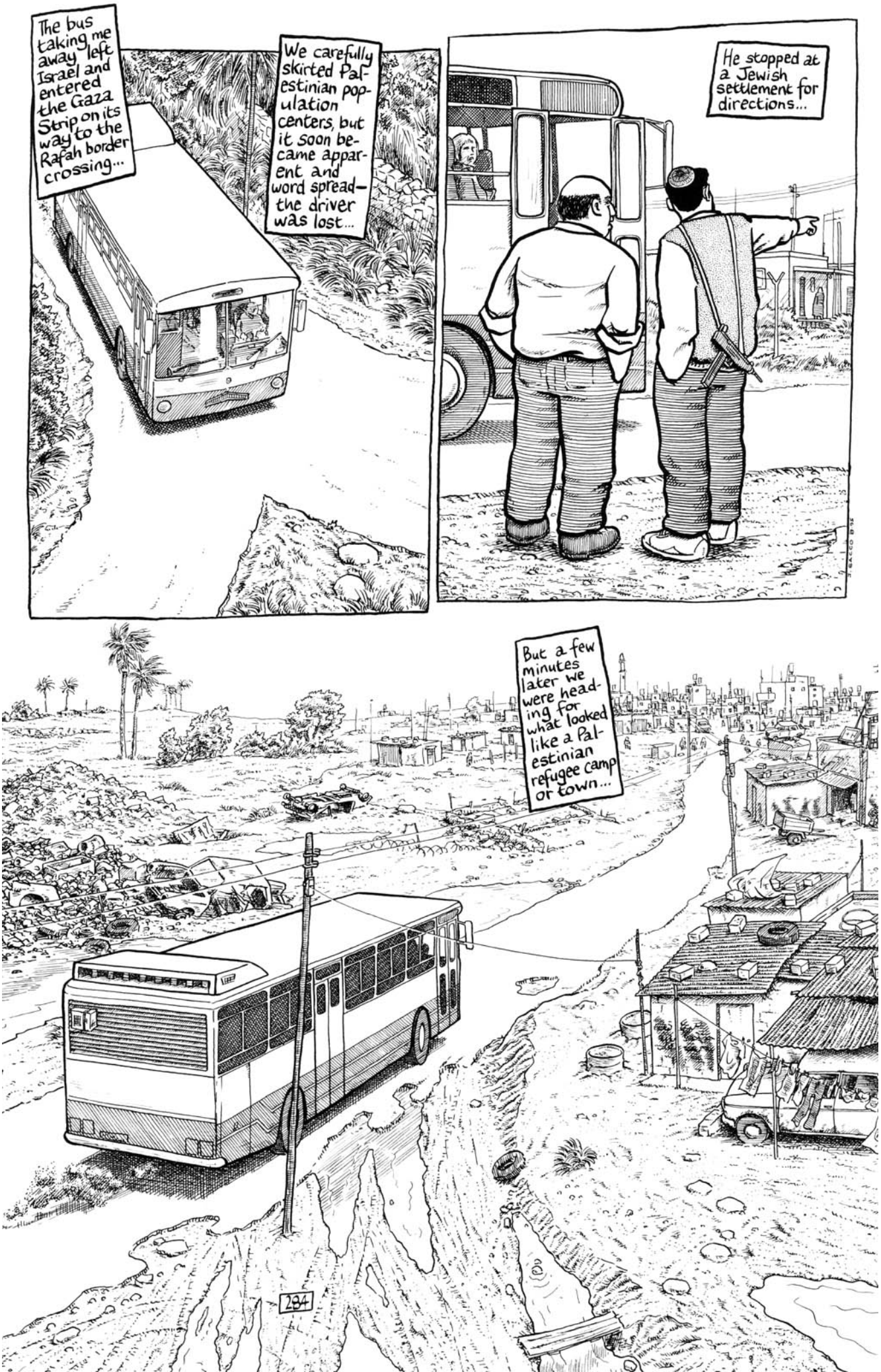
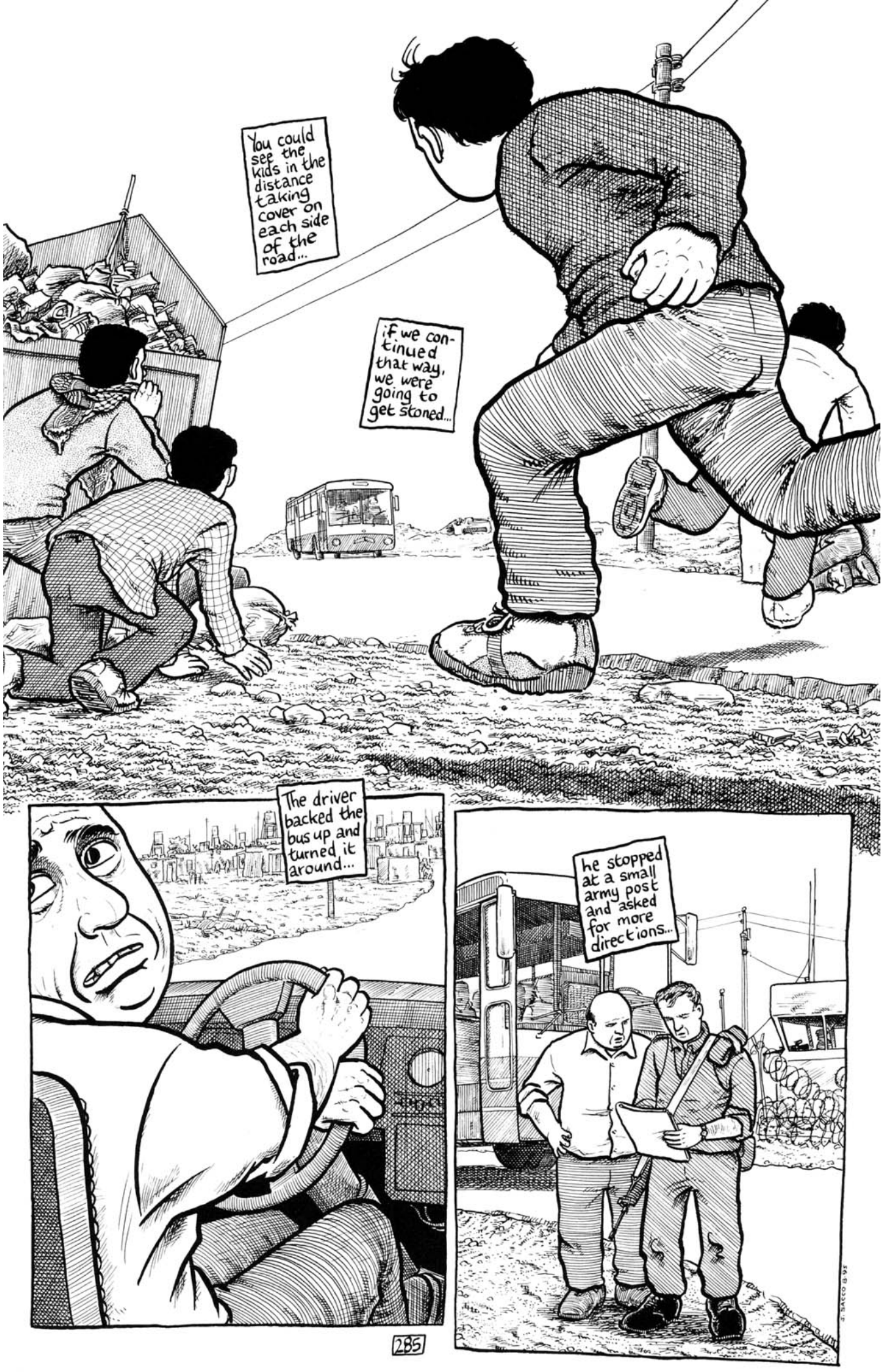
The boy stood there and answered their questions, and what choice did he have?

But what was he thinking?
Was it, one day it will be a better world and these soldiers and I will greet each other as neighbors?
or was it simply, one day—
one day!
and beyond the particular abuses of this time and place, beyond the really big questions—the status of Jerusalem, the future of the settlements, the return of the refugees, etc.—which must be raised and then hurdled if there ever is to be peace here, is something else—
a boy standing in the rain, and what is he thinking?
T. SACCO 8.95

and if I'd guessed before I got here, and found with little astonishment once I'd arrived, what can happen to someone who thinks he has all the power, what of this—
what becomes of someone when he believes himself to have none?
283


The bus taking me away left Israel and entered the Gaza Strip on its way to the Rafah border crossing...
We carefully skirted Palestinian population centers, but it soon became apparent and word spread—the driver was lost...
He stopped at a Jewish settlement for directions...
But a few minutes later we were heading for what looked like a Palestinian refugee camp or town...
284


You could see the kids in the distance taking cover on each side of the road...
if we continued that way, we were going to get stoned...
The driver backed the bus up and turned it around...
he stopped at a small army post and asked for more directions...
J. SACCO 98

About the Author

photograph by Michael Tierney

Joe Sacco was born in Malta. He graduated from the University of Oregon with a degree in journalism. His comic book *Palestine*, about his time in the Occupied Territories, won an American Book Award in 1996, and his graphic novel *Safe Area Gorazde*, about his time in Bosnia won the Will Eisner Award for Best Original Graphic Novel in 2001. Sacco has also contributed graphic journalism pieces to *Details*, *Time* magazine, and *Harper's*.

Also by Joe Sacco

SAFE AREA GORAZDE
and other stories of the Bosnian War

Safe Area Gorazde (2000) is a 228-page original graphic novel detailing Sacco's 1995-1996 trips to Bosnia during the aftermath of the war. ***Soba*** (41 pp., 1998) and **"Christmas with Karadzic"** (1997) contain further explorations of the Bosnian War. The magazine-format *Soba* focuses on one of the fascinating people Sacco met in Sarajevo, while "Christmas with Karadzic" (published in the anthology *Zero Zero* #15) shows Sacco's close encounter with one of Bosnia's most prominent war criminals.

Ordering information:

Soba: $4.95 postpaid
Zero Zero #15: $4.95 postpaid
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